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Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Government History Documentation Project
Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Era

THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE: ACCESS AND OUTREACH, 1967-1974

Melvin Bradley	Facilitating Minority Input on State Policy, 1970-1974
Jackie Habecker	A View from the Reception Desk
Roger Magyar	Governor Reagan's Task Forces on Tax Reduction and Local Government

Interviews Conducted by
Gabrielle Morris
and
Julie Shearer
1983-1985

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PREFACE

California government and politics from 1966 through 1974 are the focus of the Reagan Gubernatorial Era Series of the state Government History Documentation Project, conducted by the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library with the participation of the oral history programs at the Davis and Los Angeles campuses of the University of California, Claremont Graduate School, and California State University at Fullerton. This series of interviews carries forward studies of significant issues and processes in public administration begun by the Regional Oral History Office in 1969. In previous series, interviews with over 220 legislators, elected and appointed officials, and others active in public life during the governorships of Earl Warren, Goodwin Knight, and Edmund Brown, Sr., were completed and are now available to scholars.

The first unit in the Government History Documentation Project, the Earl Warren Series, produced interviews with Warren himself and others centered on key developments in politics and government administration at the state and county level, innovations in criminal justice, public health, and social welfare from 1925-1953. Interviews in the Knight-Brown Era continued the earlier inquiries into the nature of the governor's office and its relations with executive departments and the legislature, and explored the rapid social and economic changes in the years 1953-1966, as well as preserving Brown's own account of his extensive political career. Among the issues documented were the rise and fall of the Democratic party; establishment of the California Water Plan; election law changes, reapportionment and new political techniques; education and various social programs.

During Ronald Reagan's years as governor, important changes became evident in California government and politics. His administration marked an end to the progressive period which had provided the determining outlines of government organization and political strategy since 1910 and the beginning of a period of limits in state policy and programs, the extent of which is not yet clear. Interviews in this series deal with the efforts of the administration to increase government efficiency and economy and with organizational innovations designed to expand the management capability of the governor's office, as well as critical aspects of state health, education, welfare, conservation, and criminal justice programs. Legislative and executive department narrators provide their perspectives on these efforts and their impact on the continuing process of legislative and elective politics.

Work began on the Reagan Gubernatorial Era Series in 1979. Planning and research for this phase of the project were augmented by participation of other oral history programs with experience in public affairs. Additional advisors were selected to provide relevant background for identifying persons to be interviewed and understanding of issues to be documented. Project research files, developed by the Regional Oral History Office staff to provide a systematic background for questions, were updated to add personal, topical, and chronological data for the Reagan period to the existing base of information for 1925 through 1966, and to supplement research by participating programs as needed. Valuable, continuing assistance in preparing for interviews was provided by the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, which houses the Ronald Reagan Papers, and by the State Archives in Sacramento.

An effort was made to select a range of interviewees that would reflect the increase in government responsibilities and that would represent diverse points of view. In general, participating programs were contracted to conduct interviews on topics with which they have particular expertise, with persons presently located nearby. Each interview is identified as to the originating institution. Most interviewees have been queried on a limited number of topics with which they were personally connected; a few narrators with unusual breadth of experience have been asked to discuss a multiplicity of subjects. When possible, the interviews have traced the course of specific issues leading up to and resulting from events during the Reagan administration in order to develop a sense of the continuity and interrelationships that are a significant aspect of the government process.

Throughout Reagan's years as governor, there was considerable interest and speculation concerning his potential for the presidency; by the time interviewing for this project began in late 1980, he was indeed president. Project interviewers have attempted, where appropriate, to retrieve recollections of that contemporary concern as it operated in the governor's office. The intent of the present interviews, however, is to document the course of California government from 1967 to 1974, and Reagan's impact on it. While many interviewees frame their narratives of the Sacramento years in relation to goals and performance of Reagan's national administration, their comments often clarify aspects of the gubernatorial period that were not clear at the time. Like other historical documentation, these oral histories do not in themselves provide the complete record of the past. It is hoped that they offer firsthand experience of passions and personalities that have influenced significant events past and present.

The Reagan Gubernatorial Era Series was begun with funding from the California legislature via the office of the Secretary of State and continued through the generosity of various individual donors. Several memoirs have been funded in part by the California Women in Politics Project under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, including a matching grant from the Rockefeller Foundation; by the Sierra Club Project also under a NEH grant; and by the privately funded Bay Area State and Regional Planning Project. This joint funding has enabled staff working with narrators and topics related to several projects to expand the scope and thoroughness of each individual interview involved by careful coordination of their work.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons significant in the history of California and the West. The Office is under the administrative direction of James D. Hart, Director of the Bancroft Library, and Willa Baum, head of the Office. Copies of all interviews in the series are available for research use in The Bancroft Library, UCLA Department of Special Collections, and the State Archives in Sacramento. Selected interviews are also available at other manuscript depositories.

July 1982
Regional Oral History Office
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University of California at Berkeley

Gabrielle Morris
Project Director

REAGAN GUBERNATORIAL ERA PROJECT

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Eugene Bardach
Charles Benson
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Alex Sherriffs
Michael E. Smith
A. Ruric Todd
Molly Sturges Tuthill
Raymond Wolfinger

Interviewers

Malca Chall
A. I. Dickman*
Enid Douglass
Steve Edgington
Harvey Grody
Ann Lage
Gabrielle Morris
Sarah Sharp
Julie Shearer
Stephen Stern
Mitch Tuchman

*Deceased during the term of the project

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Berkeley, California

Government History Documentation Project
Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Era

Melvin Bradley

FACILITATING MINORITY INPUT
ON STATE POLICY, 1970-1974

An Interview Conducted by
Gabrielle Morris
in 1983

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

As Ronald Reagan's director of community affairs from 1970-1974, Melvin Bradley was in charge of the governor's liaison with minority groups throughout California. Previously Bradley had served in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and had been active in that county's Republican party. He was the second black man to be appointed to the governor's staff, the first being Robert Keyes, his predecessor as community affairs director.

In the following interview, Bradley discusses his responsibilities for providing input on minority community views on issues under discussion by the governor's staff and cabinet. Other important aspects of his work included arranging for black leaders to meet with Reagan and other administration officials and a continuing effort to insure that qualified black persons were considered for appointment to responsible positions in state government.

A slender, gracious man, Bradley responded to the interviewer's questions thoughtfully. In summing up his experiences in the governor's office, he commented that, while some might expect more in the 1980s, ten years earlier the Reagan administration's progress in appointment of blacks and assistance to minority businesses had been significant accomplishments.

By 1983, Bradley was serving in Washington as a member of President Reagan's staff. The interview was recorded on 4 May of that year in Bradley's spacious office in the Old Executive Office Building. A lightly edited transcript of the interview was sent to him for review. Having received no revisions from him, the manuscript was completed from the Regional Oral History Office's file text.

Gabrielle Morris
Interviewer-Editor

February 1987
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University of California at Berkeley

I PERSONAL BACKGROUND

[Interview: 4 May 1983]

From Texas to Los Angeles: Pepperdine and the Sheriff's Department

Morris: Would you tell us a little about your personal background? Are you a native Californian?

Bradley: I'm a native of the housing projects in Texarkana, Texas, a very small town of about a hundred thousand people. Large family, a poor family. I was essentially raised by my mother. Graduated from high school, and immediately upon graduation went to Los Angeles to join my brother, who had just been discharged from the navy, so that I could go to school to get a tuition-free education.

Morris: Are you the youngest or the middle or--?

Bradley: I'm in the middle. That was about the only kind of education I could afford at the time. I went to Los Angeles City College and later went to Pepperdine University, where I graduated and took a bachelor's degree in urban planning.

Morris: This was when?

Bradley: I left Texarkana in 1955. I went to Los Angeles City College for two years and later, after marrying and starting a family, went back to school and went to Pepperdine, where I graduated.

Morris: Good for you.

Bradley: I had an assortment of jobs. I was once a real estate broker. From there I worked for the sheriff's department in Los Angeles.

Morris: In probation?

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended.
For a guide to the tapes see page 33.

Bradley: No, I worked as just a regular policeman who patrolled the streets. From there I went to work in the governor's office [Ronald Reagan] on the staff of the assistant to the governor for community relations.

Morris: You worked for Bob Keyes?

Bradley: Bob Keyes, yes. Bob Keyes resigned in 1972 to go into the private sector, and at that point the governor then appointed me to his job.

Republican Party Activities, 1966

Morris: Had you been active in politics as a personal interest?

Bradley: Yes. I've always enjoyed politics, the interaction and especially various issues. In 1965, I guess, or '66, when the president at that time was running for governor, I just sort of got involved on the fringes of the campaign. Just because I was interested and wanted to be a part of the political process. Not having in mind at all ever really working for the governor. I just wanted to be a part.

Morris: Were you interested in getting more people to vote?

Bradley: Very frankly, I think it was mostly an interest, in the beginning, to personally try to make sure that people did not take me for granted, because I thought many people did.

Morris: Because you were a young fellow?

Bradley: Well, because most people assumed at that time, and even today, that blacks are supposed to be working or involved in the Democratic party rather than the Republican party. That was a big motivation, as far as I was concerned, to originally get involved in the Republican party.

And recognizing, also, that, while the governor of California at that time enjoyed a very, very good relationship with the black community across the state--

Morris: This is Pat Brown [Edmund G., Sr.]?

Bradley: That's Pat Brown. I didn't see much evidence of any real contribution from the administration over and beyond the usual oratory and rhetoric. So I felt comfortable in trying to develop some kind of two-party approach, because I felt it had worked for other groups in the past and it should work for us.

Bradley: That was essentially probably the biggest motivating factor for me.

Morris: Were there other young black men who shared your ideas that there should be two-party--?

Bradley: Oh, yes. And many of them became involved, but you don't have very many people who had become a part of the so-called leadership group who would take that big step.

Morris: Leaders in the black community were uncomfortable with moving over to the Republican party?

Bradley: Yes. They had a vested interest, and so it was not in their best interest, I don't believe, to do that. Most of the people who were involved were just the grass-roots kinds of people like myself.

Morris: How did the Republicans--did you feel welcome?

Bradley: Oh, yes. That has never been a problem. The Republican party, like any other party, is one where you have to work hard and fight for what you believe in, and nobody is going to give you anything.

Morris: But on the other hand, the other truism of politics is that the committees are always looking for more volunteers to get out there and do doorbell-ringing and envelope-stuffing and things of that sort.

Bradley: That's true. I always felt welcome, from the start. That hasn't changed even today.

Morris: Did you start out going to meetings of Republican clubs?

Bradley: Yes. Getting involved and meeting people who had the same goals and objectives, and strategizing as to how one could sell his point of view. To me it was interesting and exciting just to do that.

Morris: Who are the people in the party that you remember particularly from-- is this a congressional-district group?

Bradley: It was just a local Republican activist group. There were several of them that I participated in. Many of them were people who had been around for a long time and were pretty well established within the Republican party. Had never really been able to deliver that much. They'd always been there.

Morris: In terms of Republican votes in black parts of town?

Bradley: That's right. So that's really how I got started.

- Morris: I was just talking to Michael Deaver, who was telling me that he did some fieldwork then for the party in southern California, including the Los Angeles area. Did you run into him at all in '65-'66?
- Bradley: I never met Mike until after the election. Since then we have become good friends, but it was not until after the election.
- Morris: Did you succeed in bringing about a noticeable increase in Republican votes in areas that you were--?
- Bradley: No, I don't think so. I don't think that that election in 1966 delivered a lot of black votes to the governor. I think Governor Brown still took the lion's share of the vote, probably 90 percent.
- Morris: Was George Christopher of any interest at all to your part of town?
- Bradley: George Christopher had, during the primary, quite a few blacks working with him. You had blacks on both sides of that political campaign.
- Morris: People that you knew from Los Angeles?
- Bradley: I can't remember now who they were, but certainly people that I knew were working with George Christopher. It was about the tail-end of the primary that I got involved.
- Morris: In April and May?
- Bradley: Right. So most of my activity really took place during the general election.
- Morris: And then how much time were you able to put in on it?
- Bradley: Not a lot. I worked in the evenings and on weekends and that kind of thing. Because I was working at the time, of course. Just volunteering my services [in the election campaign].
- Morris: How did the sheriff's department feel about people taking part in a political campaign?
- Bradley: I don't know, because I never discussed it with them. [laughter]
- Morris: That was probably the better part of wisdom.
- Bradley: So I really don't know. I was probably in violation of the Hatch Act. I'm not sure.
- Morris: Nobody has been quite sure whether, [or] to what extent public employees can act as private citizens.

Bradley: Yes, it's a grey area. You can do certain things, and certain things you cannot do. I don't know anyone who's ever been indicted or charged with violation of the Hatch Act.

Morris: I don't know about southern California, but in northern California there has been the suggestion that, if you work for the sheriff's department, you're expected to get out and work for the sheriff when he has to run for re-election.

Bradley: Is that right?

Morris: Did you run into that at all?

Bradley: No. I don't know. We had a sheriff during that time who really had become more of an institution, and I guess running for office didn't--

Morris: Was that Peter Pitchess?

Bradley: Yes. He'd been there a long time, and he had the support of the previous sheriff from many years before. It's one of those positions that, once you win the office and do a reasonable job, you're there until you're ready to retire. It's hard to challenge successfully an already-elected sheriff in Los Angeles County. So he never really had--

Morris: He's got a strong constituency? Is that what it is?

Bradley: First of all, it's a nonpartisan race. You have name identification, and you have in our office probably one of the best sheriff's departments in the world. The sheriff just never had a political problem.

Morris: One of the things that occupied a lot of time in the governor's office was developing the idea of mutual aid amongst various law-enforcement agencies. Were you aware of any of that functioning while you were in the sheriff's department?

Bradley: No, I was not aware of it at all. I did not know a lot or have very much interest in the sheriff's office, the political--how do you say?--interaction between the county and the state and so forth.

Morris: And other law-enforcement agencies?

Bradley: No.

Morris: Was your concern more in terms of the relations with the black communities that the sheriff's department came into contact with?

Bradley: I was working for the sheriff's department. I didn't think politically, I just did my job. I did not think in terms of politics as it related to the sheriff's department.

Joining the Governor's Office, 1970

Morris: Who talked to you about joining the governor's office, and at what point? Was it shortly after the election?

Bradley: It was a couple of years after the election. Bill Beachem, who was a member of the Real Estate Commission--he had been appointed by the governor to that commission--is a person that I had worked with during the campaign. During the time he was a real estate commissioner, he came in contact with Bob Keyes periodically, because of his having to be in Sacramento on occasion. He introduced me to Bob Keyes, and we developed a relationship. Down the line, Bob asked me to join his staff, which I did, and left the sheriff's department. That was in 1970.

Morris: Did Bob Keyes consult with you in relation to things he was working on for the governor?

Bradley: Oh, yes. Frequently. We would talk about what he was doing and how it related to at least southern California, where I had some familiarity with the politics of things.

Morris: Could you share some of those things with us? The kinds of things he was interested in having happen in southern California.

Bradley: For the most part, I think Bob was trying to constantly sell the fact that the governor had an interest in involving blacks in state government and the fact that the governor, contrary to his political critics, was trying to advance the interests and concerns of blacks throughout the state. Which was a very difficult job.

Morris: People didn't believe it in the community?

Bradley: That's right. That pretty much remained true even after I took Bob's position in 1972. It was an image that the governor had that we never really successfully turned around. I guess there are all kinds of reasons for it, and I don't know some of them. But we never were able to do it.

II DEVELOPING GOVERNOR REAGAN'S COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Appointments and Appointees

Morris: What kinds of things did you and Mr. Keyes develop in order to try and turn that image around?

Bradley: For one thing, we tried to--I tried (I can't speak for everything Bob did)--we tried to look at the governor's office in some kind of historical perspective as it related to productivity, if you will, or producing results for blacks.

Morris: Now is that in terms of people in the black community appointed to various positions?

Bradley: That's one component. The fact of the matter is that prior to Governor Reagan, there had never been more than a handful of blacks who participated in state government at almost any level. There had never been a director of a department, for one thing, and in many of the various policymaking boards and commissions in the state there had never been blacks placed on those boards and commissions. Even though previous governors had enjoyed great rapport and great relations with the black community.

Morris: Mr. Pat Brown had a man named Bill Becker, I believe, as community relations head. Did you--?

Bradley: I never met Bill.

Morris: He's white.

Bradley: Yes. He was in charge of community relations. President Reagan appointed Bob Keyes when he went into office. Almost every appointment that Governor Reagan made, as far as blacks are concerned, was a first. It was that bad.

Morris: Did you work with the different appointments secretaries in finding likely candidates?

Bradley: Yes. The appointments secretary was Ned Hutchinson when I was there, and we worked very closely together in identifying blacks to bring into government and identifying positions that we could place blacks in. That was, in my opinion--although it doesn't sound like very much now in 1983--but that was a contribution that Governor Reagan made. Blacks just were not participating in state government in 1966. That's a fact.

Morris: Did you have trouble convincing some of the people that you made contact with that they might take an appointment in state government?

Bradley: Oh, no. That was never a problem. The lines were always long of people interested in appointments. That was not true then, and it's not true today. People are willing to serve, and they make themselves available.

Morris: They say one of the problems with appointments is that for every friend you make by appointing somebody, you make ten enemies who don't get the job. Did you run into that at all?

Bradley: Yes. And you make a friend for five minutes. [laughter] That just goes with the turf, and nobody is ever going to change that.

Morris: Right. But can that cause you problems down the line? If you made a bad call in who you do appoint, are there then people who can cause you difficulties because they were passed over?

Bradley: I don't think so. No more than any other area where you have to make a decision and you have to make a choice between this or that. In this business you do make a few enemies, but I don't think that the appointments process is any different from making a decision in any other area. You're going to make some friends, and you're going to make a whole lot of enemies. But I think over time people understand that, the governor enjoying the kind of support that he does and so many people wanting to participate, everybody is not going to participate. We've all been overlooked at some point in favor of somebody else for something. That's something we live with.

Morris: Did you feel that, by and large, Ned Hutchinson was receptive to your ideas and that your candidates ended up as the top ones going to the governor?

Bradley: Ned was very receptive and cooperative and sensitive. He worked well with me, and of course he had pressures from other constituencies. Every time there is an appointment to be made, there are a whole lot of people who are vying for the appointment, and many of them have political clout or some kind of "in," if you will, with somebody who can bring pressure on Ned or whoever is going to make the decision. But at some point, a decision has to be made, and most of the time the blacks who were appointed did not enjoy this kind of political clout. Usually an appointment was made on the basis of the fact that the guy--it was based on merit, and the person who was appointed was one that was well qualified for the job.

Morris: Did you stay in touch with those people whose appointments you nominated once they were [on the job]?

Bradley: Oh, yes.

Morris: What kind of feedback did you get from them as to whether their points of view were being listened to in the board or commission or in the department?

Bradley: In that regard, the people who were appointed, for the most part, were real pros. They know, as I know, that you get in the fray, and you win some and you lose some. Many times, I'm sure, they were frustrated by points of view that they wanted moved forward, but that's true, I'm sure, of the other people who are on the commission. Everybody has a point of view and you have to develop some kind of a consensus. There was never, to my knowledge, any indication that there was some kind of conspiracy on the board or commission, where people lined up against this particular appointee. We never had that problem. It was the normal, run-of-the-mill complaint about "not being able to do what I want to do" all the time.

Morris: Were there times or particular jobs where Ned Hutchinson or Mr. Deaver or Mr. Reagan would really want to put a black person in?

Bradley: I really cannot think at this moment of a particular job or position that became available where it was said we ought to have a black for that position. I know that I was in plugging all the time for everything that became available.

Morris: Good staff work. [laughter] There were a couple of department directors.

Bradley: Yes. There was the director of Veterans Affairs [James E. Johnson]. That appointment was made in 1967. That was the first black person to be appointed as a director of a department. In 1967. It's important, because departments set policy, certainly within the

Bradley: parameters laid by the governor. But they run their departments, and they have thousands of people working for them. And California, as you know, is a pretty big government, and the director of a department has considerable power. Again, prior to 1967 there was no black to be a director. Later on in the administration, there was the director of the FEPC, the Fair Employment Practices Commission [Peter R. Johnson].* That is interesting, because during the '66 campaign, it was alleged that one of the candidate Reagan's agendas was to wipe out the FEPC.

Morris: Really?

Bradley: Yes. That was a major charge by the opposition. But, in fact, he did not wipe out the FEPC. He appointed a black in the office to head it. And there were other significant appointments that the governor made. I'm trying to think of another department. I used to know these things.

Morris: Wasn't there a state housing and urban development?

Bradley: It was the Department of Housing and Community Development, but it was not housing and urban development as we know it here in the federal government.

Morris: And that was a new department during--?

Bradley: That was created in 1965. There was also the Division of Apprenticeship Standards. It had to do with the state training standards. There had always been complaints by blacks that the unions, particularly the crafts unions, were very discriminatory in the apprenticeship program.

Morris: They worked with the unions?

Bradley: They worked with the unions. The governor appointed a black to head that to try to get them squared away, if you will, on that issue.

Morris: And would you [stay in touch with] administrative people once they were appointed?

##

*The FEPC functioned as a division of the Department of Industrial Relations.

Minority Conferences and Informal Visits; Watts and the Multiservice Center Concept

Bradley: Oh, yes. We even developed conferences that we would have maybe a couple of times each year in various parts of the state where the minority appointees would come together and talk about what they were trying to do and talk about some of their problems and bring together some of the various initiatives that the governor was involved in in their own department. It worked out to be a pretty good network of people who were in touch with each other throughout the state year-round just to be helpful to each other. That was developed during the Reagan years to, basically, develop lines of communication between the minority appointees within the Reagan administration, so that there was that sense of togetherness.

Morris: Did you do the staff work on those conferences, plan them?

Bradley: Yes, we did. Early in the administration, the governor had beefed up the community relations area in his office with about ten appointees, who were housed in state offices in the major cities in the state, to report to the assistant for community relations. They were all over the state. Dealing with people and their problems. I think it was set up originally around the idea of those various state service centers that had been put into place late in Pat Brown's administration, where--

Morris: The multiservice center?

Bradley: The multiservice center, where they had sort of a one-stop--

Morris: Welfare and employment and--

Bradley: Everything. All kinds of--

Morris: I need to ask you what you were doing during the troubles in Watts?

Bradley: During the troubles in Watts I was working for the sheriff's department. [laughs]

Morris: Oh, my! You were on the beat?

Bradley: Yes. That was in 1965. I was not working with the governor's office then, because we weren't even in office.

Morris: Right, but you were in the sheriff's department.

Bradley: Well, I wasn't on duty in Watts. I was not assigned there. But during that period of time, a lot of people from other areas were brought into Watts for just a few days. I was there.

Morris: Did the way the situation blew up in Watts and the way the various authorities dealt with it have any bearing on your political thinking or on your interest in maybe getting more active in politics?

Bradley: No, none at all. It didn't affect me politically at all. I think it brought the problem to the attention of a lot of other people.

Morris: My understanding is that the multiservice center idea was in a sense a response to the complaints from people in Watts.

Bradley: That's right.

Morris: They couldn't get downtown--

Bradley: Well, that was-- [pause] Yes, you're right. That was a response to that problem. But it was a band-aid response. It really didn't reach the problem. History tells us that.

Morris: But Mr. Reagan did continue the service-center idea.

Bradley: He did continue the service center. One of the black appointees, as a matter of fact, was made the statewide director of all of the service centers. The governor, immediately after being elected, began to occasionally, unannounced and without press, go down to various black communities across the state and just visit with black people.

Morris: Did you go with him?

Bradley: This was before I went to work for the governor. He was not talking to politicians or leaders, if you will, but he was interacting with the people and trying to get a feel for how they perceived some of their problems with the state government and trying to get a personal feel for, and a sense for, the problems at the grassroots, rather than having to read about it in a memo from a staff person. He did that several times.

As a result of that, one of the things that happened was to bring out these ten people in various cities in the state to work with, at that time, Bob Keyes--to be a part of that multiservice center concept, so that these guys could use the power and influence of the governor's office to help solve some of the everyday, run-of-the-mill problems that Joe Citizen would have.

Morris: Kind of what can I do about the landlord, and my tax bill?

Bradley: Mostly it was having to do with running into a brick wall dealing with the bureaucracy, and these guys would open doors and make sure that the people that they were talking to were responsive and sort of guide them through.

Morris: And these people were permanently assigned to those communities, so that they could really get to know people and build their own network?

Bradley: That's right. It was an extension of the governor's office out into the community. And that came as a result of his going around the state early in the first administration.

Morris: Looking at some of the early staff rosters, which include community relations aides, it looks as if one idea was to relate to different minority groups in the community. There are a couple of Spanish surnames and things of that sort.

Bradley: Right. It was across the board. I think there were ten of those guys in various cities. I think there were three in Los Angeles, because L.A. is so heavily populated. It was not all black. It was across the board ethnicwise.

And that was a beefed-up community-relations activity that started during the Reagan years.

Working With Ronald Reagan

Morris: When did you first meet Mr. Reagan yourself?

Bradley: I met him during the campaign in 1966. Of course, one of thousands of people who met him. I really got to know him after going to Sacramento and taking on this job. That's when I really got to know the governor.

Morris: It's unclear, looking at the number of people in the governor's office, how often the governor needed to see any one person, and how often he would sit down at staff sessions with everybody. How did that work?

Bradley: There were regularly scheduled meetings that took place every week. Sometimes every two weeks or every month, depending on what kind of meeting it was.

Morris: Of just staff?

Bradley: Of staff people. Of staff people and/or cabinet people. The regular cabinet meetings were meetings that the senior staff, of which my position was a part of, attended. And then the governor would have working lunches periodically with the senior staff and cabinet members. Then you had meetings to address specific kinds of issues. So that there never was, for me, a regularly scheduled meeting with the governor. Sometimes I was meeting with the governor three or four times a week. Other times I wouldn't meet him at all.

Morris: Three or four times a week when something was breaking or you were developing a new idea?

Bradley: Most of the time during meetings that had to do with cabinet-level issues, where the thrust of the conversation was about the issue that was on the table that the governor and the cabinet were discussing. At those meetings, staff people attended to act as staff.

Morris: That was what I was wondering, whether you were there as resource people, or whether you were presenting programs that the governor wanted to have--

Bradley: Most of those meetings, it was the cabinet who was carrying the ball. It was no different there than it is here [in Washington]. The governor placed a lot of responsibility of running government with his cabinet, his agency heads. And it was their ball to carry. The senior staff was acting as staff to the governor.

Many times, of course, the issues had been discussed and kicked back and forth between the cabinet people and the staff before it got to a decision where you would have a cabinet meeting to discuss it. But at the meetings, it's the governor and the cabinet.

Morris: Were there other things, then, that you would work out with either Michael Deaver or Ed Meese, rather than the governor?

Bradley: Oh, yes. Scheduling the governor to appear here, there, or the other. Or having people come in to see the governor about a particular issue or project something like that. Or a particular piece of legislation or particular program that had some impact on blacks that you wanted the governor to address. Those, many times, were threshed out in staff meetings, even prior to taking them to the governor.

Staff and Legislative Relations

Morris: We've mentioned Bob Keyes a couple of times. Since he is no longer with us, could you tell me a little bit about him, and how he functioned and operated in the governor's office?

Bradley: How he functioned and operated. Tell me exactly what you mean.

Morris: Whether he had some very strong ideas that he was trying to get across, or whether he by and large worked along with the rest of the people in the governor's office. Was he an innovator?

Bradley: I think so. I think you could call Bob an innovator. And aggressive. Bob was opinionated, and he many times was like a lightening rod, if you will. He had good rapport with the people in state government and also in the governor's office. He was sort of a trail blazer, really, because I think Bob was the first black to be appointed to the governor's office at any significant level. He was a hard worker, and he had developed a good relationship with blacks on both sides of the aisle, if you will, across the state.

Morris: He had legislative responsibilities?

Bradley: Only to the degree that where there was legislation that had an impact on blacks, he would, as I would, work with our guy who had the legislative responsibility, to assure that his input was being heard. He did not in fact have legislative responsibility.

That's one of the problems with the area that we dealt with. There was little specificity about what the responsibilities were; we were all over the map, really.

Morris: In your job description.

Bradley: Right.

Morris: It wasn't really a job description.

Bradley: That's right. You had people who were advising the governor on education, and you had legislative people. You had the legal person. You had people who had specific areas of responsibility. With us it was, if we had a problem that dealt with education, we'd be working with somebody in education.

Morris: You'd be working with Alex Sherriffs rather than carrying the ball yourself.

Bradley: That's right. Alex Sherriffs would be our guy to work with in the governor's office to make sure that what we wanted done got done. And when we had meetings in that area--

[interruption: telephone call]

When there was an issue that was taken to the governor that was an education issue and at the same time was an issue that we had an interest in, then we would be a part of the process as well. But since it's an education issue, Alex was the lead person on it, of course.

Morris: How about on things like the Office of Economic Opportunity and the welfare reform, which got a lot of press during Reagan's years as governor? My recollection of OEO is that there were lots of people in black communities who were very much involved in the local work of planning and managing committees. How did they respond to some of what looked like the Reagan people trying to impose a whole set of controls on OEO programs?

Bradley: For the most part, the people in OEO opposed the governor's efforts to try to make the organization more responsive to people problems, rather than the broad brush, sort of uncoordinated, solve-everybody's-problems-no-matter-what-it-is approach that was being used. And the governor was opposed and misunderstood about what he was trying to do.

Most of the activity took place before I went to Sacramento. It had kind of calmed down [by the time I got there].*

Morris: The major welfare reform was 1970 and '71, which was right there when you were coming in.

Bradley: That's right. I remember that well. But it was before I went to Sacramento. While I caught some flack on that, I did not catch the major flack on that. Bob Keyes was the guy who was catching it at that time. [laughter]

[Welfare is] another issue where the governor was trying to make some changes that was misunderstood by a lot of people--but I think in retrospect history will be good to the governor in that regard, because immediately after those reforms were instituted, those people who were on welfare began to receive more money. I think they received, for the first time ever, something like a 40 or 43 percent increase. It was because of changes that the governor had made in trying to reform welfare.

But it's almost like anything else, when you change things and begin to talk about something new, people become frightened and suspicious. And that was no different. That was a long and bitter fight.

Morris: Yes. And one that had gone on all during his first term.

Bradley: A long time. It put a lot of people's feet in cement, as far as how they felt about Governor Reagan.

Morris: I wonder, did you make any special effort to get to know the black caucuses? I don't know if there was a black caucus at that point. The people in the legislature?

*See interview in this series with A. Lawrence Chickering and Robert B. Hawkins, Jr., for additional information on the California Office of Economic Opportunity during the Reagan administration.

Bradley: I knew them, yes. Not in relationship with this particular effort or any particular legislation. I just knew them because it was good for both of us to know each other.

Morris: I was thinking particularly of Willie Brown, who was already a leading figure in the assembly and made some pretty loud noises about he didn't like the way Governor Reagan was behaving. When you talked to him, did you get a sense [of] how much of that was rhetoric and how much of it was real disagreement with how the governor was doing things? Sometimes you hear that the legislature, they make a lot of noise, but they're--

Bradley: I understand. I understand. During the period we're talking about, it was Bob who had the lead responsibility, and I'm sure he was in touch with Willie. But Willie might be a bad example, because Willie was the chairman of the finance committee [Assembly Ways and Means, 1971-1974] during those years, and the chairman of the finance committee can talk directly to the governor. You don't necessarily have to talk to a Bob Keyes or a Mel Bradley. You don't have to communicate to the governor through those kinds of people.

Morris: I see. You talk directly to the governor.

Bradley: Willie Brown--not only [him, but] whoever is the chairman of the finance committee has the direct access to the governor, because it's a powerful position. But, in general, the relationship between Bob and myself and blacks who were part of the state legislature was good. There were many times differences of opinion as to the way we were trying to do something versus the way they wanted to do it, but I think there was general agreement also on where we wanted to go. And we were all, we thought, headed in the same direction. Or headed for the same goal. But they felt, in many cases, that the administration was going down the wrong road.

Morris: Towards getting it.

Welfare Reform

Bradley: And of course, we felt another way. The welfare reform is an example of that.

Morris: Your sense was that there was a general agreement that there needed to be some changes in the state welfare program?

Bradley: Well, I think there was general agreement that some changes in the welfare program would not necessarily be catastrophic. [laughter] But I also think, generally, that the opposition felt that there was no real need to make a lot of changes in the welfare system.

So when the governor wanted to make these changes, it was felt that he was out to hurt those who were on welfare. But again, history will point out the fact that he in fact did not hurt the welfare recipient. He helped the welfare recipient. I don't think a lot of people realize that today.

Morris: I know that Mr. [Robert] Carleson makes the point that when the task force looked into things, they discovered that there hadn't been any increases in the amounts of individual benefits for, as you say, seven or eight years. And I think that was lost in all the rhetoric that was expounded.

Bradley: There's no question about it. And there were all kinds of regulations that--how do you say--universalized welfare; that was the general direction that welfare was headed.

Morris: So that the same rules applied to everybody kind of thing?

Bradley: Well, no, my point here is that--I'll give you an example. The president [Reagan] uses this every once in a while. Some person back East in some city who was a well-to-do--maybe not well-to-do, but a corporate VP, if you will--called the president and complained about the fact that he was allowing his son to receive food stamps and to be on welfare and that kind of thing, and he, the father, did not like it. And the governor, after checking into it, had to respond that there was nothing he could do about it. Because the rules were such that, if this person declared himself--

Morris: An emancipated minor?

Bradley: There you go! [laughter] I think he was away from home, or considered on his own, and he was unemployed, and he was unable to care for himself, so to speak, [so] he could get welfare. He could get food stamps. He could get this. He could get that. He could survive. While, at the same time, his father was probably making a hundred thousand dollars a year, for example. It's that kind of thing that the president was concerned about.

These benefits that were being received by this person should have gone to someone who really and truly needed it.

Morris: Had no connections that would feed him.

Bradley: That's right. Now, that example is probably an extreme example of the welfare system not really attacking the real problem, but the rules were such that there were all kinds of loopholes and areas where people could just play around with the welfare system. And they did. And the governor was trying to tighten those rules up. And in fact, he did. The net result of that was that those people who were on welfare and deserved to be, got more money.

III CONCERNS OF BLACK LEADERSHIP

- Morris: If you've got a couple more minutes, I'd like to ask you about the memo that I came across that was from Bob Keyes, but it sounds like it might have also affected you. This was a memo that Mr. Keyes submitted to the Office of Planning in December of '71.
- Bradley: What is the thrust?
- Morris: It was part of a forward-planning effort that went on the last two years. It says, "A statewide poll conducted during the 1970 gubernatorial campaign reflected race relations as the number two concern of California voters." Does that ring a bell with you?
- Bradley: No. This is 1970?
- Morris: Nineteen seventy-one is the date of this memo that was in with the governor's papers at Stanford, at the Hoover Institute.
- Bradley: I'm trying to remember what was going on in 1970 and '71. I cannot address that memo. I don't doubt that it's true. If he says it's true, I believe him.
- Morris: Okay. This memo is addressed to some planning efforts that were looking for ways to keep the last two years of the second term vital and interesting and keep some things being accomplished. I wondered what kinds of things were developed in your unit for the last couple of years of Mr. Reagan's terms as governor?

Bradley: You're really stretching my memory now on that. Can you give me a moment to think about that while you go to whatever your next question might be?

Morris: If it does not remain in your memory, then it sounds as if there wasn't anything major. What I would wind up with is [what are] the things that have stayed in your memory as the really important things that we may not have touched on about what you saw happen and were able to see come to pass in the governor's office, in terms of your community relations department.

Bradley: I should have pulled some information for you before--it's probably in California--before you even came here, to refresh my memory as to what we were doing during the last two years we were in Sacramento.

##

Civil Service Reform

Bradley: I recall the governor addressing the civil service reform, which is something that, in fact, is important to blacks. It was discovered that in the state civil service system there were few blacks in civil service jobs. He addressed that by way of trying to turn around the entire civil service system to make the exams and the approaches to potential employees job related, if you will. For some of the jobs that were available after this reform took place, there was no civil service examination.

Morris: New categories of jobs?

Bradley: Well, it was the governor's thinking that if you had a position in the state that required you to--as a painter. Painters make pretty good money. Why should this person be required to have two years of college or something like that? What you're looking for is a guy who knows how to paint. So maybe what you should do is to develop another way of evaluating the potential candidate. Maybe through some kind of demonstration of skill, a physical-proficiency examination, if you will, rather than sitting down and writing out the answers to a bunch of questions. As a result of a lot of the civil service reforms, the number of minorities who were a part of the state system--

Morris: Workforce?

Bradley: --workforce, increased over the Reagan years. At the same time, the overall number of state employees either decreased--I can't remember which--or was about the same as when he came in.

Morris: It stayed level.

Bradley: Right. So the point is, these things don't just happen. They happen because somebody is there to make them happen. In this case, it was a concern of Governor Reagan's, and he did it. Again, it's something that's lost in the shuffle.

Morris: It's an important thing, [the number of] jobs has been one of the major stories in terms of how successful people are in the community. Did you, as part of your responsibilities, stay in touch with things like the civil service, the state Personnel Board?

Bradley: Oh, yes.

Morris: Was this one of the places where you had a working relationship with some of the board members?

Bradley: Worked very closely with--not so closely with the civil service board in my experience, but I worked with the staff people, who really were the ones that were doing the job. It was essentially designed to identify barriers that would preclude blacks and other minorities from coming into the state workforce. They found a lot of them. And did away with them. I think that had a lot to do with the fact that the numbers increased during that period of time.

Participation in Government Process

Morris: How about organizations like the NAACP, with a long history of being concerned about how the government functioned? Were they helpful in providing information or ammunition in developing some of these programs?

Bradley: The NAACP was very helpful in providing information and assistance in those areas where they agreed with us. This is an example. They would be very helpful. Even when they did not agree, they would certainly come in and make their voices heard and feel assured that at least you heard their side of the story. That was ongoing.

Morris: They were one of the kinds of organizations you regularly touched base with?

Bradley: Oh, yes. They were always apprised of where we were. If they had any comments on it, they were welcome to come by. Although they disagreed with a lot of the things that the governor did, they were never precluded from participating and making their feelings known.

Bradley: But there is something that's important to understand here as it relates to the NAACP. It's their job to apply pressure to whoever is in office.

Morris: Right. And to work both with Democrats and Republicans.

Bradley: That's right. And they're going to bring heat. And they're going to put your feet to the fire. There's just no question about it. And you have to live with that. It's not something that was exclusively set aside for Governor Reagan. It is for whoever is the governor.

Morris: I was thinking of it more the other way around. What kinds of things that the NAACP and the Urban League and other organizations working for black rights, how much of their ideas were useful to you and Mr. Reagan?

Bradley: I think even when the NAACP was suggesting one approach and, in fact, we did something else, their input has always been helpful. You know, I can't think of an example now, but many times you can have an idea that you want to go directly down this road, and somebody will come in and raise a few issues. And while you might not turn and go the other way, you might modify your position a little bit. That comes as a result of communicating. That does not mean that we were in agreement; but to suggest that the NAACP had an impact on the administration and people working in it, I think is accurate. Even though we were battling with them quite a bit.

Morris: You were battling them quite a bit?

Bradley: Yes. Well, the administration. Many times we were on one side of the issue, and they were on the other.

Morris: Talking with you, you've got a very interesting stance in terms of how you get things done in the governor's office, and I'm wondering if this is your natural mental approach, or if there were training sessions in how you deal with complex public issues and--?

Bradley: I don't have any training, no. I was just me. The role that I played in the governor's office was to assure--one of the roles--to assure that, as policy was set in the governor's office, that it was not set without having the input of the minorities. They deserve a shot at the issue, and it was through my office many times that that input was facilitated.

One of the roles that I played, I think most of all, more than any other role, was that of a facilitator. It was not a question of whether I agreed or disagreed in many cases; it was the process--

Morris: That's true with the planning process, too, isn't it?

Bradley: That's right. [laughter] I think it was incumbent upon the governor to hear all sides. I think I would have been derelict in my responsibilities had I not done that.

Morris: Did you ever feel uncomfortable, outnumbered, that there were people in the governor's office who might not be as cordial to you as you were expecting that they might be?

Bradley: No, that was never a problem. That doesn't mean we agree, now.

Morris: I accept your premise that you don't have to agree with everybody in order to work satisfactorily with them.

Bradley: We disagreed on a lot of issues, but it never affected our relationship. In this business, almost any issue that's being discussed, there's going to be some on one side and some on the other side. And the next issue, the complexion of the group might change a little bit, but you're still going to have some on one side and some on the other side. I might be here with this group today, but tomorrow the issue might call for me to be with another group. That's just the way it works. You either agree or disagree, and you take your best shot, and then the governor makes a decision. That was my approach. It's the real professional way to handle it.

Morris: The sense I get is that you felt that you did make an impact and those concerns were cranked into plans as they went along.

Bradley: Oh, yes. That's right. And that is not saying that I got everything I wanted. That's not the case at all. I lost on a lot of issues, but the input was made.

Morris: Do you have some other souvenirs there of your years in the governor's office?

Bradley: [looks through folder in his desk] I'm flipping through some papers now to try to figure out some of the other things that I might want to raise with you. [pause]

Equal Opportunity Practices

Bradley: One of the things that the governor did was to reaffirm and redefine, if you will, the state Code of Fair Practices, which is another area where a lot of the governor's critics thought he would be lukewarm at best.

Morris: Is this on the state-government contracting?

Bradley: This is on the state law that requires employers, not only the State of California but private employers, to have incorporated in their hiring practices equality and equal opportunity.

Morris: If they're going to receive state contracts?

Bradley: No, period.

Morris: Across the board.

Bradley: That's right. That was something that he affirmed early in the administration. That, along with the civil service reform, addressed a lot of job concerns that a lot of people had. Of course, you know about the Welfare Reform Act. I think that's a big plus when you start doing assets and liabilities. I think that the reform in welfare is certainly--

Morris: In terms of getting resources to numbers of individuals?

Bradley: That's right.

Morris: On things like the fair practices, would you have been asked to go out and make talks to contractors' groups or other types of people to explain the governor's ideas?

Bradley: I was seldom asked by the state, if you will, or the governor's office, to do those kinds of things. I got requests all the time from various groups to appear here and there. I accepted those requests for appearances as appropriate. But I was never used, if you will, to go out and--by the governor's office--to sell the governor's office. That was not my job.

Morris: One of the things that occurred to me is, if the governor was doing some work on fair practices and wanted to reaffirm the idea, that when the contractor's association, for example, or the real estate board, asked for a speaker for their annual dinner, whether it was ever said, "Let's see if Mel can go to this."

Bradley: That happened very rarely. Most of the people on the staff received individual requests to speak.

Morris: They asked for a special person.

Bradley: Yes. And I had my share, of course. Thinking back over those days, they were very, very interesting. I had sort of forgotten about a lot of that.

Morris: Did you enjoy it?

Bradley: Oh, yes, I really did. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed living in Sacramento. I enjoyed my stay in Sacramento. Much more than I have enjoyed Washington, D.C., if you really want to know the truth.

Morris: Really?

Bradley: That's true.

Morris: Because of the scale, the size--?

Bradley: I don't think it's the size. In Washington you don't have a private life. In Sacramento you could at least have a private life. You work in a fishbowl here. I'm a very private person, and it might affect me more than it does maybe some other people. But being a private person on a public job in a public town requires you to do a lot of--

Morris: Just being here for a few days, I get a sense that the kind of hours you work would put a wage and hour administrator up the wall.

Bradley: That's right. I come to work about seven-thirty in the morning, and I leave at night sometimes, when I get tired.

Morris: That's very hard on you.

Bradley: I know. And it has caused a lot of problems with people's married life here and their families and their health. I'm trying to avoid that.

Hope for a Color-Blind Real Estate Profession

Bradley: I'm noticing here another thing that the Reagan administration worked to achieve, and that was a color-blind real estate profession. It's--I'm still thinking this is 1983, but in the sixties, the--

Morris: They were still fighting the fair-housing battle.

Bradley: Not only that, but the realtors, the association, was a segregated association.

Morris: Still in 1970?

Bradley: It took a long time to break that up. And it was done through the efforts of Governor Reagan working with his real-estate commissioner, a guy by the name of Bob Karpe. The first black real-estate commissioner was appointed by the governor. And one of their charges was to begin to gradually turn that around. Not to go in and just bust them wide open, but to begin to gradually turn it around. And in fact, they did.

Morris: That reminds me of a woman named Arlene Slaughter in the East Bay, who was a pioneer in trying to integrate the realty profession and also break some of the unwritten covenants about where black people could and couldn't buy houses. She was also very active in extremely left-wing politics. Would that cause a problem with Mr. Reagan's people? She was working with something that you were really interested in.

Bradley: This is an example--?

Morris: This is a local example. She was right there with what you were trying to do, make the [real estate] profession color-blind. Yet other aspects of her work--she was very active in extremely liberal Democratic politics. Would that be a problem, working with somebody like that?

Bradley: If I understand what you mean by extremely liberal Democratic politics, it would not have an effect at all. If she happens to be a very active kind of a Democrat--

Morris: Yes, say, a supporter of Ron Dellums.

Bradley: No, that would not help or hurt us.

Morris: In the area in which you were--

Bradley: In that area. If she agreed with what we were doing, we just appreciate the fact that she is for it. And it doesn't make any difference if she's associated with the Democratic party. As a matter of fact, most black people in the state of California are Democrats. If we were doing things or not doing things on the basis of one's party politics, we wouldn't do anything. So that would not have been, in my opinion, a consideration.

Morris: Maybe more on her part than yours?

Bradley: She might have been less comfortable than we would.

Morris: Right. Not comfortable agreeing with Mr. Reagan about something.

California Small Business Program

- Bradley: That's true. There was this California Job Creation Program that Governor Reagan had also.* Contrary to it's name, it was really directed at creating, or helping to create, minority businesses, so that those minority businesses could create jobs.
- Morris: That's interesting.
- Bradley: That was done during the Reagan years, and it was a part of the overall job creation program that the administration was interested in.
- Morris: Did you work directly with that, or is there somebody else we might talk to about that?
- Bradley: Louis Carter, who is in Sacramento now.** I can give you a phone number before you leave. As a matter of fact, I think he's going to be appointed Superintendent of Banks in northern California.
- Morris: By Governor [George] Deukmejian?
- Bradley: By Governor Deukmejian. They work with guaranteed-loan programs for businesses and--
- Morris: Sort of a California small business administration?
- Bradley: Right. Something like that, yes. That was something that--
- Morris: Could you find some money in the state budget for that, or was there a federal program?
- Bradley: I think that their efforts were designed to encourage the private sector to come up with the money, and I think that--
- Morris: Spinoff?

*See interview in this series with James Hall for additional information on the Cal-Job program.

**See Louis Carter, "Piloting Assistance to Small and Minority Business," in Services for Californians: Executive Department Issues in the Reagan Administration, Regional Oral History Office, U.C. Berkeley, 1986.

Bradley: It was like, as I recall--and Lou would know more about this than I--it was like the private sector or a bank would come up with the money, but it was guaranteed by the government.

Morris: The state government.

Bradley: The state government. So the state government, in fact, did not pay out. They just guaranteed the payback by the individuals who borrowed it. It was a matter of matching up aspiring entrepreneurs with an appropriate business opportunity.

Morris: Were you personally out looking for likely entrepreneurs?

Bradley: No. My job was sort of a facilitator. People would come to me for all kinds of things. Many times people would come to me with a problem that this organization, under Lou Carter's leadership, could handle. And I was a traffic cop. You know?

Morris: Okay. That's a useful image.

Bradley: I think one of the major contributions of the governor was also to introduce blacks to state government, because it was just a fact that we were not there. And he made a lot of appointments, and they were significant ones.

Morris: That also starts a network, too. Having worked together in state government, I suppose people stayed together in things they do subsequently.

Bradley: True. There's no question about it. And it was helpful. It was useful. I have a whole list of those appointees someplace.

Morris: Maybe if Molly Tuthill might have that at the Hoover Institution.

Bradley: Oh, Molly I'm sure has it, yes. I'm sure Molly has it. I'm sure Molly has everything.

Morris: If not, it may turn up in your files by the time you get the transcription of our conversation. Because that would be a nice thing to [include in the] record.

[pause]

Bradley: During the last two years of the administration, my area of activity was one, I think basically, of building on what had happened in the first five years or so. [Looking through folder of papers] This rings all kinds of bells with me.

Morris: Did you present many issue memos yourself? That looks like a kind of summary statement of some thinking or research.

Bradley: I don't know if you'd call it a lot. I wrote memos. I don't know where they are. Molly might have them. I don't know whether that's good or bad, the fact that she has those. But I did. I was looking for something that I might even give you.

Morris: If you do find that you've got something that says things the way that pleases you, we'd be pleased to put it with the interview.

Bradley: The governor chartered three minority-owned banks during his tenure, one in San Diego, San Bernardino, and Oakland.

Concluding Thoughts

Bradley: I guess one of the problems I'm having is, as I flip through this stuff, it sounds, in many cases, not to be significant in 1983. When you say that the governor appointed a black to the state appeals court, or whatever they call it, which is a big appointment, or the governor appointed a black to be the director of a department, that doesn't sound like very much in 1983. I have to continue to put this in its proper perspective; and maybe I'm not giving you what you need, because it just doesn't sound that important. But in 1967 it was pretty important.

Morris: Right. That's one reason for asking people to stop and take a bit of a historical perspective on this, to get a sense of how things have happened in fifteen years, and then if you talk to people who were--if you talk to Byron Rumford, for instance, as we have done, and his description of what things were like in 1956, there are benchmarks along the way.*

Bradley: I guess you're right.

Morris: We may not have arrived yet where we would like to be, but we're asking people to think back [about] what the milestones have been along the way. We've come a distance. We may not be, as you were saying, where we would like to end up.

Bradley: Yes. I guess there are other things that I could mention.

*William Byron Rumford, Legislator for Fair Employment, Fair Housing, and Public Health, Regional Oral History Office, University of California Berkeley, 1973.

Morris: What you've told me is very interesting. How the process works and the fact that you were, indeed, putting in these perspectives into any number of kinds of discussion.

Bradley: It was always there. And many times I would arrange for other people in the governor's office to meet with certain people, to meet with certain individuals or certain groups. What I was trying to do was to make sure that that perspective out there was heard.

Morris: You mean like an agency secretary, for instance, meeting with--?

Bradley: Yes, with the NAACP president or chairman or whatever. Or somebody else might want to meet with Ed Meese about an issue to get a point of view across. It didn't necessarily have to be me. I was--

Morris: It's a question of access.

Bradley: Yes. I was more of a facilitator. People would call me for the darndest things. I say the darndest things; there were people who would call me and talk about an issue and say, "I'd like to sit down and talk with whomever about it."

Morris: "Who should I talk to about it?"

Bradley: Well, they would say--let's use Ed Meese as an example--"Look, I'd like to talk to Ed Meese about it." The person could probably call Ed Meese direct. Of course, he doesn't know Ed--maybe he doesn't know Ed, or maybe he does. I don't know. He probably could get on the calendar. But invariably I would get the call, and I would have to be the one to facilitate the meeting. I guess that's just one of the services that one performs in a job like that.

Morris: I think in some cases it helps if you can talk to somebody about an idea before you ask someone else for a decision on it.

##

Bradley: Yes, I guess you're right. It's a tag that's difficult to rid yourself of. It followed me here. For a while I tried to hide from it, but I was not successful. I just had the idea that I would come here and just do a job, be hired on to do whatever, like anybody else. But that's not the way it worked out at all.

Morris: Are the people who were with Mr. Reagan in California recognized around here as having been with him a long time and knowing some things, maybe, that the old hands in Washington don't know about the administration?

Bradley: Yes, they are used as a resource. It sort of gives some of the guys a leg up on a lot of people, to know the president and what has happened in the past and have some history with him. I don't think that that's a negative at all around here.

Morris: I'm keeping you from your lunch, and I have another appointment. Thank you very much.

[end of interview]

Transcriber: Sam Middlebrooks

Final Typist: Shannon Page

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Government History Documentation Project
Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Era

Jackie Habecker

A VIEW FROM THE RECEPTION DESK

An Interview Conducted by
Julie Shearer
in 1985



JACKIE HABECKER

1985

with State Police Officer Alfred McBride
assigned to Protective Services for the Governor

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

For nearly thirty years, every lobbyist, legislator, local citizen, or foreign head of state who wanted to see the governor of California has had to see Jackie Habecker first. However, it is not political power Ms. Habecker deals in but politesse. In her job as the governor's receptionist since 1959, she has greeted the general public "...who come in from all walks of life with problems, ideas, inventions, whatever" and done "a lot of just listening to people."

Over the length of her service to Governors Edmund G. Brown, Senior; Ronald Reagan; Edmund G. Brown, Junior; and George Deukmejian, she has observed the parade of staff members, party strategists, supplicants, and school children who wanted to see the governor and noted how the various governors responded to their constituents. In the interview that follows, Ms. Habecker was asked to comment on this interface between the governor and the public with reference to the personal styles of the individual governors, the character of the requests they had to deal with, and the shift in the balance of access versus security against a backdrop of increasing citizen advocacy and social protest.

The interview took place on February 7, 1985, in the State Capitol. Another staff member covered the receptionist's desk for an hour while Ms. Habecker contributed her recollections to the tape recorder. Her speaking manner, a distinctive blend of warmth and dignity, made it clear why each succeeding head of state since Governor "Pat" Brown has asked her to stay on the job. Several times various governor's staff members interrupted the proceedings to verify personal schedules and whereabouts of meetings, the details of which Ms. Habecker seemed to have at her fingertips.

The lightly edited transcript, with several additional questions appended, was sent to Ms. Habecker in March 1985 for review and emendation. She graciously supplied the additional answers which were noted in the transcript, and made very few other changes. Following return of the transcript in November 1986, it was retyped in final form, indexed, printed, and bound.

Julie Shearer
Interviewer-Editor

March 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

(JACKIE)
Your full name MARY JACQUELINE HABECKER
Date of birth 3-16-26 Birthplace OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA
Father's full name JOHN KENDALL HUSHALL
Occupation AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE Birthplace OKLAHOMA
Mother's full name LOLA MARY SMITH HUSHALL
Occupation HOMEMAKER Birthplace OKLAHOMA
(DIVORCED)
Your spouse CLARENCE WAYNE (BUSTER) HABECKER (DECEASED)
Your children GREGORY WAYNE HABECKER - DAVID WARREN HABECKER
DEBORAH ANN HABECKER GALE
Where did you grow up? OKLAHOMA CITY AND SACRAMENTO
Present community SACRAMENTO
Education HIGH SCHOOL - ST. JOSEPH ACADEMY - SACTO
RECEPTIONIST
Areas of expertise HUMAN RELATIONS
Other interests or activities MY WORK AND FAMILY ARE ALL
CONSUMING AND FULFILLING
Organizations in which you are active NONE

I JOINING THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE STAFF

[Interview 1: 7 February 1985]##

Shearer: This is the 7th of February, and this is an interview with Jackie Habecker, who has been in a position to observe and is now in a position to comment on the office of governor as occupied by Governors Pat Brown, Ronald Reagan, Jerry Brown, and possibly, Governor Deukmejian. First, I would like to ask you to tell us a little about yourself. Are you a native of Sacramento?

Habecker: Not really, although I've lived here most of my life. I'm practically a native.

Shearer: So you've been close enough to observe the general political scene.

Habecker: Yes, I have.

Shearer: How did you come to work in the state government?

Habecker: I just applied for a job back in the Warren administration, actually. I'm working now for my sixth governor. I came in as a clerk typist and worked into secretarial positions. Then, in 1959, I became receptionist.

Shearer: Working for?

Habecker: Governor Brown, Senior; I worked part of Governor Warren's administration, and part of Governor Knight's, and then since the administration of Governor Brown, Senior, I've been receptionist.

Shearer: Did you have a notion of what you would be doing as receptionist? In a way, I envision a receptionist as kind of the front-line

This symbol indicates that a tape of a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 25.

Shearer: person to meet the public, to be the most visible interface between the head of our state and the public he serves. How did you view your job when you came in?

Habecker: I really didn't give it that much thought when I started at the reception desk, because I was asked to do that. I hadn't aspired to being receptionist. I found, in very short time, that I thoroughly enjoyed it. This is my niche.

Shearer: Who asked you to serve?

Habecker: Our office manager.

Shearer: You had been doing clerical work up until that time?

Habecker: Right.

Shearer: Do you have any notion of why you were chosen?

Habecker: I don't think it was because of any talents that I had at that time. They needed someone. I have no idea. I was just asked to fill in at the reception desk first, to be the assistant receptionist, because the lady who had preceded me was preparing for retirement.

Shearer: How did you find your introduction to this job?

Habecker: Through a neighbor who worked for the state. He knew I was seeking employment, and suggested I might want to try the Governor's Office, since the positions here are not civil service and would not require having to take a test. I came down and applied, and was hired immediately. This was in 1945.

II RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GOVERNOR'S RECEPTIONIST

Shearer: Can you give us a rundown on what the job entails? Do you have special duties, or a routine that you follow?

Habecker: As receptionist, I handle the public in general: people who have appointments with the governor, staff, people who are seeking appointments. There are many, many people who come in from all walks of life with problems, ideas, inventions, whatever. They want to see the governor, and it is primarily my duty, I think, not necessarily to determine who is going to see the governor, because I have nothing to do with the scheduling of the appointments, but to determine if it's a problem; for instance, if it is something that the governor's office could help with. If not, then I have to refer them elsewhere, or very often it isn't anything that the state government can help them with. Often many disturbed people come in too, so it takes a lot of patience and understanding, a lot of just listening to people.

Shearer: Is your sense that the type of request or number of people seeking the governor's help or ear on some problem or invention has changed over the administrations of Governor Brown, and Reagan, and Brown?

Habecker: Probably not really. Population-wise, of course, the state has grown. We have always had people come in. It's surprising the people who come in and either want or expect to see the governor.

Shearer: Could you give me an example of something that surprised you? What are some of the actual schemes or concerns that people have voiced?

Habecker: Oh, it can be on any given issue that might be brought up in the legislature, for instance, but lots of personal matters; trying to get their children back through the courts.

Shearer: So, custody arrangements?

Habecker: Custody matters. Families with someone in a county jail. Of course, the governor has no authority there. That's all within local government. There are so many varied things. People, as I mentioned earlier, who have a plan to solve our water problem, who have inventions for all kinds of things. Some probably have some merit. It's just a matter of trying to put them in touch with the right people. Where it goes from there, we don't always know. There are people who have some good ideas, who have some legitimate concerns: money problems, property problems, you name it. They come in.

Shearer: And they feel that they can just go straight to the top and speak to the governor?

Habecker: Right.

Shearer: Can you recollect whether the volume increased? I'm thinking of the observations of the people who have studied the governorships of Pat Brown and Ronald Reagan, and who have noted that Governor Brown seemed willing--almost eager--to get out and meet the public and "press the flesh."

Habecker: That's true.

Shearer: Did that encourage, do you think, more people to seek out Governor Brown? Or do you have a sense that this operated?

Habecker: I think, probably, that is true. He was a person who liked to meet people. I think it became, perhaps--well, obviously there was a little more security during the Reagan administration. We still had a lot of people come in, but perhaps not as many on a personal basis.

Shearer: Would Governor Brown be inclined to respond directly to a request to see him? Or would it tend to go through others?

Habecker: More so, I think, than Governor Reagan and Governor Brown, Junior. I could often call in to his secretary, and indicate that someone was here from another state, or a friend of a friend or a school group, and ask if the governor could spare a few minutes to greet them, or say "Hello," or talk with the class. He was very good about doing that.

Shearer: This is Governor Brown?

Habecker: Governor Brown, Senior.

Shearer: He would come right out and shake hands--

Habecker: Or we would take them into his office.

Shearer: One of the things I had asked you off tape, which is a real sin, is whether the physical organization of the office has remained the same during your tenure.

Habecker: Yes, it has, pretty much. Starting I believe, in Governor Reagan's administration, he created the cabinet. Prior to that, we had what was called the Governor's Council; all of the department directors. Then, the cabinet was created. That would be the real, major change as far as the office is concerned, having cabinet members come in, limited to cabinet members for certain meetings.

Shearer: Was it also a change in location? Did the Governor's Council meet apart from the governor's physical office?

Habecker: The cabinet met in the governor's private office, or cabinet room. Prior to that, from at least Governor Warren's administration through Governor Brown, Senior, they met in a large room behind the reception room, which is called the council room, so named because of the Governor's Council.

Other than that, I would say there have been no changes. We still have changes in names of the various offices. For instance, our Legal Affairs Office, now, used to be Extraditions and Executive Clemency. But it's the same thing. It's just a change in the name. Scheduling, now, used to be Invitations.

Shearer: I'm not sure I understand how scheduling--

Habecker: What we call our Scheduling Office, now, used to be called the Invitations Unit. In other words, they handled invitations, making outside appointments, that sort of thing.

Shearer: Did you feel that your responsibilities remained about the same?

Habecker: For me, yes. I'm kind of removed from the inner workings of the office. My job really doesn't change that much. I always have lots of new people to meet and new faces to recognize, but my responsibilities remain pretty much the same. I'm dealing with the public.

Shearer: Do you tend to make a recommendation directly to someone who seeks to see the governor if you know that their request can be met by another unit in government?

Habecker: Within our office, or within another state department or agency, yes.

Shearer: So you do have something of a gatekeeper role by your knowledge of the state services and the state government?

Habecker: Not as far as who might be able to see the governor. In the administration of Governor Brown, Senior, I was able to get a lot of people in, just for a brief meeting or greeting, but I never pursued that too much. After that there was a difference in the subsequent administrations in that respect from Governor Brown, Senior, who was very énthusiastic about meeting people.

Shearer: Could you describe that a little more fully? What was the difference? Was it a matter of using time differently, or a degree of informality or comfort with an informal style? Was Governor Reagan less comfortable with the direct contact with a group of his constituents?

Habecker: Well, he always seemed very comfortable with groups. I can't say why his time was scheduled differently. I don't know that.

Social Activism and Security Measures

Habecker: The security did increase. Times changed a great deal. Toward the end of the Brown, Senior, administration, we began having changes as far as the Watts riots and problems at the University of California. We had more and more demonstrations, and they did tighten security. In fact, we really had security, I would say, for the first time.

Shearer: Really? And what did that consist of, at that point?

Habecker: Prior to Governor Reagan's administration, and for a short time into his administration, we had no locks on the doors leading into the inner part of the office. They had always been propped open before, and you could trust people to not go beyond where they were told. If they walked into the council room and were asked not to go beyond the door at the end of the room, they didn't go beyond that door. They would look around and walk out. Then, as demonstrations began occurring, we had the Black Panther invasion into the assembly chamber.

Shearer: You're referring now to the presence of four or six of the Black Panther party, who were actually carrying guns? [May 2, 1967]

Habecker: Carrying guns into the chamber. We did close the doors leading into the inner part of the office and had locks put on them that are electronically controlled by me at the reception desk.

Shearer: So physically, you are also the gatekeeper?

Habecker: Yes.

Shearer: Have you ever had to press the button? Is that what it would require to close the door?

Habecker: No. Pressing the button will release the lock.

Shearer: Oh.

Habecker: If someone pushes on it, it will open the door. Of course, there has been really only one incident that I can recall. [staff member enters] One, or perhaps two incidents, but one in particular that I can recall, where I set off the alarm because we had a demonstration going on. (This, by the way, was in the administration of Governor Brown, Junior.) When someone opened the door from the other side of the hallway--the inner part of the office--the leader of this group charged through the door. So I did set off an alarm to alert the State Police.

Shearer: What was the demonstration. Do you recall?

Habecker: We had so many. I believe that it was a group of nurses, or psychiatric nurses, or something of that nature. I can't recall. We had so many demonstrations. They would be here on different issues. They were no doubt here on some legislative matter.

Shearer: And the member of this group--

Habecker: The organizer. And some of the others followed. They panicked, I think, once they got inside, but nevertheless they did break through. They didn't break through the door, but they charged through the door when someone opened it from the inside.

Shearer: And this was the door into the reception area?

Habecker: No, from the reception area into the hallway leading around to the governor's office and the staff offices.

Shearer: I see. And what happens when the alarm is sounded? What is the response?

Habecker: The State Police answer immediately. It sounded in the office of the State Police.

Shearer: And they were able to calm the situation?

Habecker: Yes, they were.

Shearer: Is that the only time you've ever employed that?

Habecker: The only time I can recall. I was saying there might have been another incident, but I really can't remember any time that I hit "the panic button," so to speak. Because we had a room filled with people, and it was a pretty explosive group at that time. I mean they were pretty riled up. I shouldn't have used the term "explosive." They were charged. I didn't know whether they they were going to charge right into governor's office or not--and of course, that's my responsibility, to keep them within the reception area.

Shearer: Did Governor Brown come out then, and--

Habecker: No. This was, I think I mentioned, the administration of Governor Brown, Junior. He did meet with different groups. I don't recall his having met with that particular group.

Shearer: You say the first real security measures were taken late in the administration of Governor Brown, Senior--

Habecker: No. The first real problems of demonstrations occurred then. The security did not really take place until Governor Reagan's administration.

Shearer: And what were the problems, as you saw them? Were there moments of crisis when you felt you were going to be--

Habecker: Just an increase in the number of demonstrations, the size of them, the reactions of people. In Governor Reagan's administration, and fortunately it was after we had the security locks on the doors, we had another group in demonstrating, and a group that called themselves the Black Panthers, at least, came in to support the other group. At that time, they sort of took over the reception area, but I was able to keep control of the doors. There was no way they could get inside.

Shearer: By "took over," do you mean they installed themselves, and set up psychologically?

Habecker: They demonstrated to the extent that they were standing on my desk. They were setting fires in ashtrays. One of them sat down in my chair, because I had to stand in order to see over their heads, the room was so filled. I was never threatened by them. I did not feel threatened by them.

But it was simply a demonstration to gain as much news coverage as possible. It eventually dissipated. In fact, the group who originally staged the demonstration, the leader of that group, was the one who persuaded the others to "Please leave," that they were not helping the cause. Security measures became really necessary. We've had the reception room that you entered literally jammed from wall to wall with people.

Shearer: But at the time of this demonstration, the alarm system was not in place? That came after this?

Habecker: The time of the demonstration where I--

Shearer: The one that you just described, where the people were standing on your desk, and setting fires in the ashtrays, and so forth.

Habecker: The alarm system was probably installed as early as Governor Warren's administration. The camera was installed in Governor Reagan's administration. There's a camera above my desk, and that's also monitored in the State Police office, so they were very much aware of what was going on. We did have State Police officers come in and stand by. There was no physical removal of anyone.

Shearer: So the alarm is really your early warning system when someone comes in and you can see that situation may be tense, although the TV monitor may not pick up the conversational clue that you pick up as a human observer.

Habecker: Right. I've always tried to avoid having to set off an alarm, whether it's an individual or a group, because I think any governor would want to avoid any confrontation if possible. That's part of my responsibility too, to keep things as calm there as I can. I can always call a State Police officer, and ask if they can stand by, if I might need some help, but to do it in a quiet sort of way, without getting people riled up.

Shearer: Well, I gather that that practice of yours has been effective. Your tenure has been extended, and extended, and extended from governor to governor.

Habecker: I'm very fortunate, yes.

[the following comments were supplied in writing following the interview]

Shearer: You mentioned that Governor Pat Brown was accustomed to strolling out of the office without an escort and that this changed in subsequent administrations. Was Governor Reagan always accompanied when he went outside the office?

Habecker: Yes. Usually by a staff person as well as by one or more state officers.

Shearer: Did Governor Jerry Brown continue this practice? And what about Governor Deukmejian?

Habecker: Yes. They did the same.

Shearer: Can you characterize recent demonstrations?

Habecker: In June of '86 we had a group of about fifty protesting the National Guard's being sent to Nicaragua. They began their sit-in around noon, blocking the main door of the reception room and the doors leading into the inner offices. At 6 o'clock when the office was to be locked, they were told they had the option of leaving or being arrested. As I recall, about half of them left and those who refused to leave were removed and arrested.

In September of '86, there was a group of ten to fifteen arrested for blocking the entrance to the reception room. They were there in support of the "AIDS" bill.

Shearer: Have the ground rules or security measures been changed in Governor Deukmejian's term in office?

Habecker: The only change in Governor Deukmejian's term in office is that I usually have a nonuniformed state police officer next to my desk during working hours.

[transcript of interview continues]

The Governor as Boss

Shearer: Can we talk a little bit about the governor as boss, as sort of "chief employer" in the office. Is that an appropriate concept for us to be discussing? Is the governor sort of the boss of the office in that sense?

Habecker: Well, in essence, yes, he is. However, he has staff people who really run the office for him. As far as policies within the office, I don't know that the governor really--I'm sure he's concerned about policies, but he puts trust in his staff members to see that things are run efficiently.

[staff member enters]

Shearer: You were just commenting on the role of the governor as boss of the office. I'm wondering if you could comment on any differences in the three governors, in the degree to which each noticed what was going on with the staff at your level.

Habecker: I'm probably not the right person to ask that question of, because I am removed from the inner part of the office. I don't work directly with the governor. My contact, even with staff people, is usually by phone.

Shearer: Did you ever get any feedback from any of the governors indicating that they were aware?

Habecker: As far as governors moving around the office, going into different staff offices--let's put it that way. Perhaps that might give you some information. I hate to be hesitating here. I really don't know. I know I have seen the two governors Brown visiting in staff offices. I don't think that's really any answer to your question. I'm pretty much confined to the reception desk, and I don't get into the inner part of the office, unless it's during my lunch hour, to go back and find a place to eat lunch, or whatever.

Shearer: What kind of out-of-the-office connection might there be? I remember reading in one of the oral histories--I think it was Mrs. Bernice Brown's oral history--where she seemed to take a great deal of pleasure in arranging for outings and luncheons for the office staff.

Habecker: Yes, she did.

Shearer: Did you participate in those luncheons?

Habecker: Yes, I did. She usually had two different luncheons around Christmas time, so that half of us could go one day and the other half the other day. That was always very nice. She was the only one who has done that.

Shearer: So there haven't been annual parties--

Habecker: Governor and Mrs. Reagan had a couple of barbecues at their home, and invited all of the office, and, in fact, their families. A pretty big outing, for a barbecue, and swimming, and that sort of thing. It was very nice.

Shearer: This was where? In Sacramento?

Habecker: At their home here in Sacramento.

Shearer: And this was every year? Or an annual thing? Or--

Habecker: It didn't turn out to be that way. I think they had at least two that I can recall. It was very nice. They invited all the family; children, everyone.

Shearer: Do you field all calls coming into the governor's office?

- Habecker: No, I don't. We have direct dialing. I would say that any operator calls, perhaps most of the operator calls, would be referred to me. If they call the State Capitol operator, then they would probably refer the call to me.
- Shearer: But if someone actually wants to reach the governor himself?
- Habecker: There is a public number they have to call. No one has ever been able to have the governor answer a phone.
- Shearer: So they would come through you for that kind of call?
- Habecker: No. We have someone who answers our public line, the line that's listed in the phone book.
- Shearer: And then those calls are referred to you?
- Habecker: Sometimes to me, sometimes to other staff persons, or sometimes into the Governor's Office.
- Shearer: I see. So, the difference between your job and that one is that that's only just confined to the telephone, and yours is meeting the public as well as screening--
- Habecker: The telephone.
- Shearer: --the calls which might be referred to you from the public number. What about Governor Brown, Junior? What kind of social connection did he have with the staff? Any at all?
- Habecker: Just, well, a Christmas party, for instance, where everyone attended that, and he also attended. Occasionally there might be, perhaps, a farewell party for a staff person, or something of that nature, being held at someone's home. He enjoyed that. He used to go to different homes for functions of that nature, but nothing that I can recall where he actually sponsored or held something for the office. Of course, he was a single man.
- Shearer: Yes. He didn't have a steady hostess?
- Habecker: Right.
- Shearer: But he would be more inclined to visit the homes of his own staff and administration?
- Habecker: Only on a special occasion, that I'm aware of.
- Shearer: Was that not so common with the other governors?

Habecker: Probably not. I think it was a little more informal in the Brown, Junior administration.

Shearer: Is there any office routine or office ritual? Do you see the governor when he comes in in the morning? Does he pass by your desk?

Habecker: Not when he comes in. If he goes out to lunch, or goes out for a press conference, or some meeting upstairs, or an appointment in another agency, then he frequently will at least return through the reception room; and yes he does say, "Good Morning," or "Good afternoon," or "Hello, Jackie."

Shearer: I'm trying to think if there's any ritual that one governor, as opposed to the other governors, followed.

Habecker: No. I'm going back to the Brown, Senior, administration. Again, there wasn't the security. The governor frequently used to come in through the front door in the mornings, coming from the residence, the mansion. He would, very often, go out the door going to lunch, sometimes by himself to go over and meet someone. Everything was very loose and relaxed, and no fear at that time.

##

Shearer: I know Mrs. Brown commented, I guess somewhat to her dismay, that Governor Brown would walk across the street, not exactly in his bathing trunks, but in informal dress, to the motel across the street, which had a swimming pool. Before the mansion had a swimming pool, the governor would just take a swim at the motel because the manager was "kind enough" to allow the governor to do so.* I guess those days are gone.

Habecker: I'm afraid they are.

The Question of Whom To Admit

Shearer: Talking about members of the governor's staff, his office--I'm trying to think of the position. In Governor Reagan's case it would have been occupied by William Clark.

Habecker: Executive Secretary, Chief of Staff.

Shearer: Chief of Staff. Did he ever give any directions or instructions on whom to admit of the governor's own administration, as opposed to members of the public, or the legislature? Were some administration people "in favor," or "not so in favor?"

*See Bernice Layne Brown, "Life in the Governor's Mansion," an oral history interview conducted in 1979, Brown Family Portraits, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1981.

Habecker: No. There might have been times when security was tightened up a little bit, or the policy of just permitting everyone from any department, or agency, or whatever, to have access to the office. At different times they might tighten that up a little bit. I'm sure it can be a little bit disturbing to the office staff to have people wandering around through the hallways without knowing who they are or what they're doing. Or another case might be where someone had an appointment with the legal affairs secretary and, after leaving that office, would take it upon himself to drop in on other offices to conduct business or see someone. I've known them to tighten the policy on that and ask that visitors come back to the reception area and be announced to that office.

Shearer: So that people just know who is in the halls, and who is with them?

Habecker: Right.

Shearer: But what about the staff members who may be, for some reason, out of favor, or less privileged to receive information, who may be at odds for some reason? I know one of our other interviewers commented on his own surprise at the degree to which the governor's own appointments--now he was speaking of Governor Reagan--his own appointed people, sometimes disagreed with him on policy, and undercut him. For example, in promoting or failing to promote a program the governor favored. I just wondered if this was something that would be known to you, and how you would act on this.

Habecker: Probably not. Particularly if you're speaking of staff. These are people right in the office, within the office. I'm sure I would not have been aware of that. I'm speaking of anyone I might admit from the reception room into the inner part of the office.

Shearer: But any agency head or department head, in any case, would come to you first?

Habecker: Yes. As a rule, they're just automatically admitted into the office.

Shearer: To your office?

Habecker: Into the inner office. There have been times that I have had to ask them who they were going to see, and then I would just quickly call back and say, "Mr. So-and-so is on his way back to your office." But rather than hold a cabinet-level person in the reception room, in most cases, I think the governor and the staff would want them to be admitted into the inner part of the office, because they are working directly with the governor.

Shearer: With whom would you check on that? In the case of Jerry Brown, for example, would you check with Gray Davis before you sent someone back?

Habecker: That would depend upon who the person was going to see, or if I was notified that a certain person was expected in. I might have been told to have him wait in the reception room, or have him come right in. Naturally, I try to follow orders in that respect. But I probably couldn't answer that question as far as some staff people not having as much access to the governor.

Shearer: But occasionally, you were given instructions that so-and-so is coming, is on his way, or might be on his way, and hold him--don't admit him right away?

Habecker: Right. Ask him to wait in the reception room for whatever reason. I might not have been given a reason, just, "Wait a few minutes." And they would come out when--

Shearer: Has anyone ever challenged you?

Habecker: Not really. I've had people become a little bit disturbed, but I think they understand that I'm doing a job. I'm doing what I am told. For the most part, I think they understand that. The secret is to not let them intimidate you.

Shearer: Are you speaking mainly of members of the public, or staff people too?

Habecker: In this case, I think we're speaking of cabinet members and department directors. Not staff persons, because anyone on the staff, of course, there would be no reason for me to not allow them to go into the office. They're staff. They all have keys anyway.

Shearer: Can you give me a little more particular description of what you do when you are challenged? You said, "The secret is not to let yourself be intimidated." I guess, by the person's authority and position in the administration?

Habecker: Right. Yes. I might just say, "I'm sorry, but you'll have to wait here for a few minutes, and let me announce you." I've had people come in--I would not want to really mention some names--I guess. Once in a while, a member of the legislature, for instance, might come in and just say, "Hit the button, Jackie." In other words, "Release the door so I can go in." I've had to stop them right at the door. By stopping them, I just simply don't press the button, so there's no way they can get in. And I've had to ask who

Habecker: they're going to see, and say, "I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to call in." On one occasion in particular, a member of the legislature became a little bit upset with me, and I simply said, "I'm sorry. I'm only doing my job."

Shearer: And that was accepted?

Habecker: That was accepted. He didn't try it again. Had I acted frightened and intimidated by him, I'm sure he would have tried it again. You don't have to be nasty in doing that. You can be very nice about it, but let them know that I'm in command here.

III CHALLENGES ON THE JOB

Moments of Crisis

Shearer: What do you recall in this job as your moment of crisis?

Habecker: Well, I can't think of anything that I would really call a crisis, other than demonstrations.

Shearer: Which took place--

Habecker: In the reception room. Of course, we had demonstrations in Governor Reagan's administration. We had many demonstrations in Governor Brown, Junior's administration. Sleep-ins, where people actually slept in the reception room.

Shearer: How did you handle that?

Habecker: The governor or the administration allowed the first sleep-in, even after the governor had met with the group for a couple of hours. This was very late at night. They allowed them to stay when they said, "We're still going to stay overnight, and sleep overnight." Instead of having them removed from the office, a precedent was then set by allowing this sort of thing, so we had one sleep-in after another; anywhere from a one-night stand, to the last and the longest sleep-in demonstration of two months. Two months. We had another that lasted a full four weeks.

Shearer: How did you accomplish your--

Habecker: You just have to learn to work around the noise and the confusion. Once in a while, they would deliberately try to interfere if I was on the phone or talking to people. For the most part, they didn't try to interfere with my work. But you just had to work in this chaotic atmosphere.

Shearer: That is amazing. Four months. Now which group was this that--

Habecker: Two months. Two months was the longest. That was the anti-nuclear group, demonstrating against Rancho Seco in Sacramento. The next longest one was a group of former mental patients. They called themselves NAPA--Network Against Psychiatric Assault. They were here for four weeks with sleeping bags, mattresses, food. An incredible period of time.

Shearer: Did the governor take the opportunity to explain to you what he expected of you in those circumstances, and why he was taking the decision that he did?

Habecker: No. I would like to think that had he known what was going to happen, he would not have allowed the first group to sleep in, to stay. I think they stayed two nights. This happened on a weekend, a Friday night. I think they stayed also on Saturday. I wasn't here at the time.

Shearer: How did you maintain the security and integrity of your files and--

Habecker: They didn't try to interrupt anything.

Shearer: But was there someone here representing the staff all the time that the demonstrators were here?

Habecker: Not on the weekends and at nighttime. We had uniformed state police officers. When I went home at night, I had to have an officer sit at my desk. Then, I would come in early the next morning, and literally step over sleeping bodies to get to my desk.

Shearer: Well, that is something.

Habecker: It truly is. Once the precedent was set, the governor, I'm sure, would have found it hard to say yes to one group, who happened to be the farm labor people, (that was our first sleep-in).

Shearer: This was the two-night occasion?

Habecker: Right--and then no to another group. Or no to another person, whether it be another individual or a group. Because we have had demonstrations from an individual, to two or three, to a dozen people and from one-night stands up to the two-month period of time.

Shearer: What was the effect on you?

Habecker: Well, it's disruptive, of course. It's certainly not very nice for the public to look into the reception room and find people lounging all over in sleeping bags and mattresses. A mess, an absolute mess!

It ran its course. Eventually, the sofas became so bad, they were in such a state of disrepair, that it was far more embarrassing to me to have people come in and see the sofas in the condition they were in than to have people come in and see the wooden benches that we eventually had in the reception room. Toward, I would say, the last two-and-a-half years of Governor Brown, Junior's, administration, we had simply the hardwood floors and two wooden benches in the reception room. The noise level was tremendous.

Shearer: And no rug at all?

Habecker: No rug. Nothing to cushion the noise level. Besides that, the doors were propped open in the Jerry Brown administration, the front door, the double doors. They were propped open, so I had all the noise from the marble hallway. There are hundreds of people there during the legislative session. The halls are just jammed with people. The noise from that, plus the other, that was an experience.

Shearer: Remarkable! So you had to suffer through the wooden benches and the hardwood floors for how long?

Habecker: The wood floors actually were put in about '76, I believe. After he had been in office for not quite two years, the carpeting became so worn that it had to be removed. Rather than put carpeting in again, because by then we were having demonstrations and sleep-ins, they chose to just have parquet floors.

Shearer: Did you notice a lessening of the sleep-ins fairly soon after that?

Habecker: Not because of the wooden floors. Once the wooden benches were put in, then that sort of ended the sleep-ins. In fact, they were put in when the anti-nuclear group, the group who stayed two months, left. We had one or two of the demonstrators return after having read about this in the paper, just to show that the wooden benches would not deter them. But it did indeed. We did not have any more sleep-ins after that.

Once in a while, someone might say they were going to sleep-in, but they didn't. And it wasn't because they were told that they couldn't. There were some new ground rules set concerning eating in the reception room and having sleeping bags. They could not have sleeping bags and they could not have food in the reception room. If they wanted to stay overnight and demonstrate, they would sleep on the floor or on the hard bench. It was indeed a deterrent to the sleep-ins. Hopefully that will never happen again.

- Shearer: I don't remember reading of that strategy. Was it just simply done?
- Habecker: Right.
- Shearer: Is there anything that you would like to mention? Any story that illustrates, particularly, your impression of either Governor Brown, Senior; Governor Reagan; or Governor Brown, Junior?
- Habecker: Not really. Of course, I found Governor Brown, Senior, a very warm, friendly man who loved being governor. He loved people. He loved meeting people; as you say, the personal body contact of shaking hands with someone. I think Governor Reagan was, perhaps, a little bit more aloof. Perhaps he might not have been had it not been necessary to increase security. But I think there was that difference in personalities. Governor Jerry Brown could be friendly, but he was a very shy person, I think. He was hard to get through to, at times. That was just his personality. I perceived it more as being shy. I think he was a very intelligent person, but very withdrawn.
- Shearer: When you say, "Hard to get through to," were you recalling a direct contact, or just your observations?
- Habecker: No. Just my observation of the governors with the public.
- Shearer: What do you think was the most difficult moment of your job, or the most challenging?
- Habecker: Well, I do frequently have really disturbed people coming in; off-the-street people. Some have legitimate problems, and very sad problems. Others are mentally disturbed people, very emotionally disturbed people. It can be difficult, particularly if the room is filled with people. I wasn't thinking about this sort of thing in terms of the interview. I was thinking more in terms of security. I would really have to think a few minutes.
- I've had so many unusual incidents happen. I've had a person who had escaped from the mental hospital come in, who was threatening to do bodily harm to someone if he couldn't get some help. He was literally pleading with me, not threatening me, to try to help him. [staff member enters]
- Shearer: You were saying that he was a very severely disturbed escapee from a mental hospital and who was pleading with you to help.
- Habecker: I had convinced him that he needed to go to the Department of Mental Health and let them help him. Rather than press the alarm, or

Habecker: sound the alarm, I managed to write a brief note and hand it to one of our employees as they walked through the reception room with some mail, or whatever, to take across the hall, so that they could read the note. And I asked them to have an officer step in.

I prefer doing it that way, rather than to sound an alarm and have someone come charging in. That alone was all it took for this man to look around. As soon as the policeman walked in in uniform, the mental patient just said, "Good afternoon," and walked out. He didn't show up at the Department of Mental Health, unfortunately. I was a little fearful at the time, because he was almost climbing on my desk, pleading with me, saying that he was going to do great bodily harm to someone if he couldn't get help. Therefore, I wrote the note. In retrospect, had I not done it, I think I could have convinced him that he needed to go to the Department of Mental Health.

We've had people walking through the Capitol nude!

Shearer: What do you do?

Habecker: Well, the uniformed officers take care of that. I had a lady, not too many years ago, come in wearing just a slip. We took her right into the council room, a large room behind my desk.

Shearer: To meet with the governor?

Habecker: No. Away from the public--until someone could talk with her and get a little history on her and probably admit her someplace.

Shearer: When I came in this morning, you were mentioning to someone that the consul general from Nigeria was going to be coming through again. What happens when you have to deal with our state's generous abundance of disturbed, and disadvantaged, and colorful personalities, in the presence of a representative of a foreign government? How do you handle that?

Habecker: What do you mean, "How do I handle this?"

Shearer: Well, I mean the mixture of high-level foreign diplomats, or foreign service people, in the same room with the more colorful people.

Habecker: That's where it can be very difficult. There are times, if it's someone I'm familiar with, or if it's someone who has created a disturbance before, I have no hesitation in calling and asking for an officer to come over and talk with him. Sometimes I tell him that's what I'm going to do.

Shearer: Have you ever had to explain--

Habecker: To a dignitary, for instance?

Shearer: To a dignitary? What can you say?

Habecker: Yes. Oh, yes. That's just part of what we have here every day, almost on a daily basis. There are quiet days, but there are some days that whether or not the full moon has really any significance, I can't say, but I'm inclined to think it has.

Job Satisfactions

Shearer: What's the most rewarding part of the job?

Habecker: Just my contact with people, the friends that I make. And to have people come in just to say, "Hello," to me.

Shearer: Can you think of anything in particular that you especially enjoyed about working with any of the governors we've mentioned, Governors Brown and Brown, or Governor Reagan?

Habecker: No, because there again, it's pretty much the same with me. There are different kinds of people. For instance, in both the administrations of Governors Brown, we perhaps had more of the celebrity-type people visiting the office than we did during Governor Reagan's. I'm sure that could be attributed to the fact that since he was a star himself in the movies, that his contact with that type of personality was easier when he was down at his home, or at private functions at his home here.

In the administration of Governor Brown, Junior we had Prince Charles here for a luncheon. In the present administration, Governor Deukmejian's administration, we had Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip here. So, that's kind of one side of the coin.

Shearer: Did you have to learn particular etiquette for greeting, or being in the presence of, a crowned head?

Habecker: No. I did call the Secretary of State's Office, because at one time they were the Protocol Office for the state. Now, there is a protocol officer not connected with the Secretary of State's Office, but I called just to find out a little of the protocol.

Everyone met Prince Charles. With the queen, we didn't meet her, but we had occasion to see her. I happened to be one who was in the room with her and knew that I dare not step up to her, or offer to shake my hand, or say anything to her, unless she made the approach, or extended her hand.

Shearer: What is the office protocol? Is there a protocol, written or unwritten?

Habecker: No, I don't think so. Not anything that I'm aware of. There is a protocol officer for the state, but I think that that's primarily for dignitaries from other countries, not any particular protocol as far as the office is concerned.

Shearer: So when the governor enters, people don't stand, necessarily.

Habecker: No. I find myself doing that once in a while. I think that goes back to my very early schooling, where we stood when an adult, or a teacher, or--I happen to have gone to a Catholic school--if a priest or another nun came into the room, or a parent, we were taught to stand and say, "Good morning, Father," or whatever it might be. And all through my school years, that was something that was inbred there that's hard to get away from.

Shearer: Is there anything you would care to add?

Habecker: I think not. I think that pretty much covers it.

Shearer: On security or anything? You said you had given most thought to that question, because that--

Habecker: Right. I think that was really pretty much covered just by the fact that, I would say, in the administration of Governor Brown, Senior, we really didn't have security. He did not have security.

Shearer: One thing has to do with the Chessman case, where there were communications coming in from all over the world, begging either that he be executed, or that the execution be stayed by Governor Brown. And there was an all-night vigil and so on. How did that affect you?

Habecker: Not that much. I think, had that been today, we would have the demonstration all over the building. But a lot of the demonstrations, I think, were held elsewhere. We did have just volumes and volumes of correspondence. We would have small groups come in with petitions, as I recall, asking that the governor either stay the execution, or go forward with it. There were hearings conducted on clemency matters, Caryl Chessman's as well as others, during the administration of Governor Brown, Senior, and maybe one or two in Governor Reagan's administration. I think there was one execution during the early part of Governor Reagan's administration.

Shearer: It was Aaron Mitchell.

Habecker: Yes, Aaron Mitchell, a local person here. The clemency hearings that we held were always very sad. We had families of people who were going to be executed, and they often would be waiting in the reception room.

Shearer: Where were the hearings held physically? In the council room?

Habecker: The Caryl Chessman hearing was held in the council room, with a lot of reporters.

Shearer: But you did see the family?

Habecker: I didn't see any of his family, no. I don't recall having seen any of his family, and I don't recall the names of any of the other persons that the hearings were held for, but we had several clemency hearings where members of the family were there.

Shearer: And it was clear from their demeanor and--

Habecker: You would almost feel that you would have to put yourself in their shoes, and think that for the grace of God--you know. So those were very difficult. Of course, we don't have clemency hearings now, we have extradition hearings. I have no idea what goes on because I never attend anything like that.

Shearer: Do you feel that that facility, or that a facility, for putting oneself in another's shoes is an important consideration for the job that you hold?

Habecker: Oh, definitely.

TAPE GUIDE -- Jackie Habecker

Date of Interview: 7 February 1985

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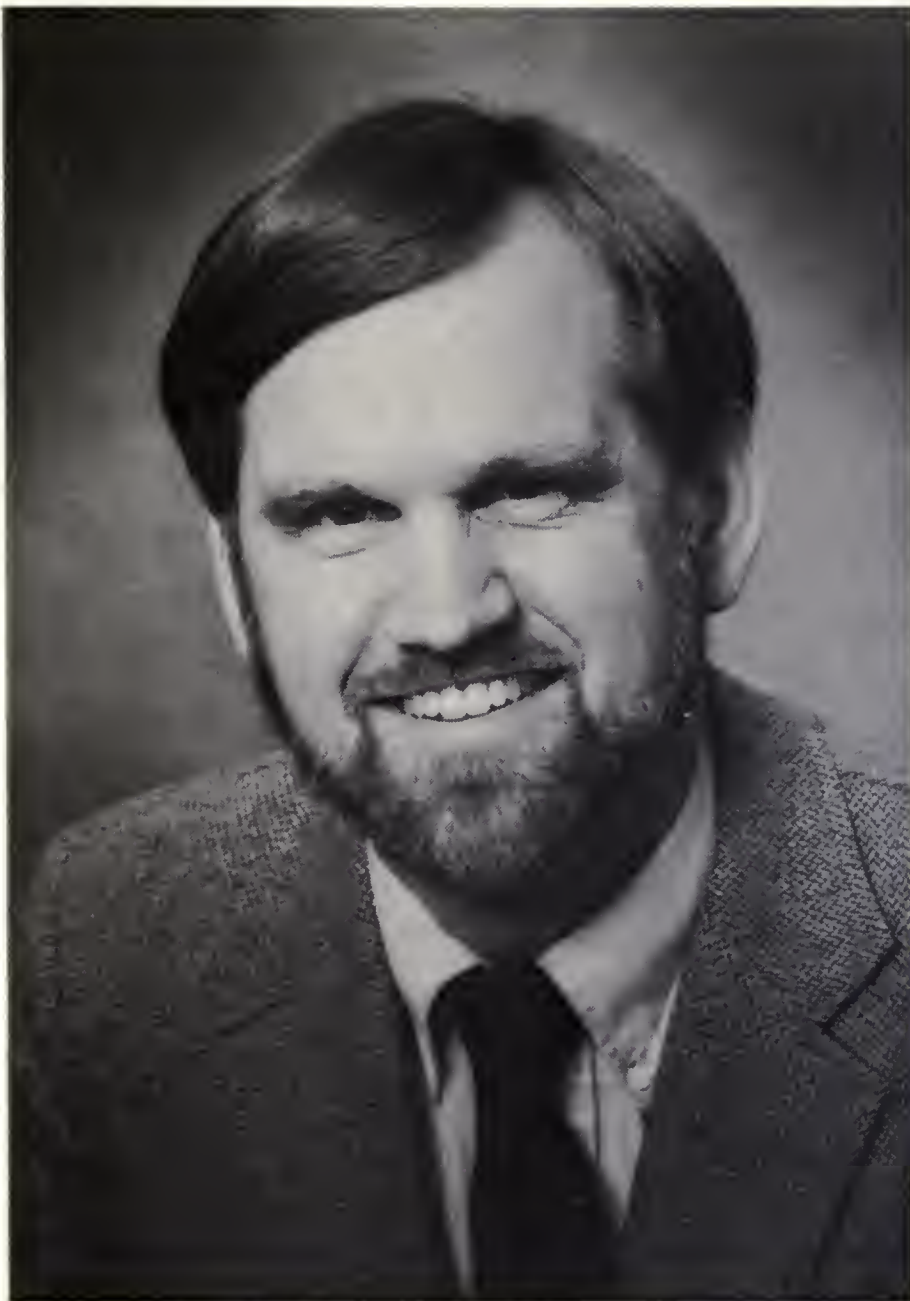
University of California
Berkeley, California

Government History Documentation Project
Ronald Reagan Gubernatorial Era

Roger Magyar

GOVERNOR REAGAN'S TASK FORCES
ON TAX REDUCTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

An Interview Conducted by
Julie Shearer
in 1984



ROGER MAGYAR

1984

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Ad hoc committees, advisory groups, and other short-term bodies created to study, and sometimes to solve, significant problems have a long and checkered history in California. Their popularity reached its zenith under Governor Ronald Reagan, who used task forces for policy formulation and for marshalling public support for his policy initiatives. Two such task forces were the Governor's Task Force on Local Government Reform and Task Force on Tax Reduction, created within 18 months of the end of Reagan's second, and declared final, term.

In the following interview, Roger Magyar, Governor Reagan's assistant for local government (1972 to 1973), discusses the content and consequences of these task forces, how the committees functioned, and the role of key members of the groups. Formally assigned to work with the Task Force on Local Government, Magyar gives a vivid account of how task force members dealt with the ambitious scope of the project--to figure out how to streamline government and eliminate overlap in the 420 cities, 58 counties and 1,000 special districts in the state. The group was expected to deliver a blueprint for action in four months "without adding an extra layer of government." "I wonder why we didn't do a research project to reorganize the United States at the same time. It would have made as much sense," Magyar observed wryly. Magyar describes how the committee and the administration dealt with the conclusions of the task force, which essentially endorsed the status quo.

Magyar also comments on the Tax Reduction Task Force and the tax reduction initiative it generated--Proposition 1. He describes consulting informally with family friend Michael Deaver, who headed the initiative campaign, and comments on the difficulty of selling the complicated concept of a tax reduction based on a projection of a "declining tax percentage of an increasing base of state income."

Two interviews were conducted with Roger Magyar. The first, on September 17, 1984, was in his parents' home in Pacific Grove, where he was running for state senate from District 17. He kindly subtracted three hours from his busy campaign schedule to allow tape-recording of his recollections of the task forces in the Reagan administration. The 42-year-old Magyar revealed himself to be a perceptive observer, acute in his recall, and an indefatigable campaigner. After some two- and one-half hours of taped commentary, he launched into an energetic, carefully constructed explanation of the benefits of the school voucher system, a core issue in his campaign platform.

The second, much briefer interview, took place six weeks after the election (in which Magyar lost to incumbent Democratic senator, Henry Mello). This interview, on December 27 in the Regional Oral History Office in Berkeley, covered an anecdote that was lost to the tape in the previous interview and included comments on the governor's staff members who followed him to the White House.

The transcript was sent to Magyar in Sacramento, where he was then engaged in policy research and analysis for the Sequoia Institute. Following his careful review, the transcript was retyped in final form, indexed, printed, and bound.

Julie Shearer
Interviewer-Editor

3 March 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Stephen Roger Magyar

Date of birth 25 January 1945 Birthplace Monterey, CA

Father's full name Stephen George Magyar

Occupation Contractor/Savings & Loan Exec Birthplace St. Louis, MO

Mother's full name Marguerite May Magyar

Occupation Housewife/Business Manager Birthplace De Smet, S.D.

Your spouse Not yet selected

Your children None to speak of

Where did you grow up? Pacific Grove, CA

Present community Sacramento, CA

Education Pacific Grove public schools, Occidental College A.B.,
Harvard Business School M.B.A.

Occupation(s) Education Reformer, Policy Analyst, College Teacher,
Governor's Assistant, Distribution Manager, Market Researcher,

Areas of expertise Senate Candidate, U.S. Marine
Education Vouchers, gardening

Other interests or activities Jogging, travel

Organizations in which you are active Parents CARE (Parents for Choices,
Accountability, and Reform in Education)



I BACKGROUND

[Interview 1: September 17, 1984]##

Shearer: I'd like to discuss the two task forces--on tax reduction and local government--in which you played a part, and the members of the steering committees and of the task forces, how the members functioned, the chronology of the task force efforts, the issues that were raised, and the ultimate outcome of your effort.

Before we get into the particular task forces, though, I would like to get some background on you. Can you give me your full name, all nicknames?

Magyar: Stephen Roger Magyar.

Shearer: Is that Junior?

Magyar: No, my father is Stephen George. That's why I go by Roger, in fact. He's called Stephen.

Shearer: And your mother?

Magyar: Is Marguerite. Marguerite Tomlinson.

Shearer: And where were you born?

Magyar: In the old Monterey Hospital, right here.

Shearer: So you've come back to your roots.

Magyar: Oh, yes, that's right.

This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 59.

Shearer: To run for the senate from Pacific Grove. Did you grow up in Monterey?

Magyar: I grew up here and I graduated from high school in 1962 and went off to Occidental College where I received an AB degree in economics. And then I went to Harvard Business School where I received an MBA in 1968. After Harvard I worked for about a year for Monsanto in St. Louis. I was involved in Astroturf which was a new product then that we were bringing to the market.

And from 1969 to '72 I was in "His Majesty's Marine Corps of foot." When I came back from overseas I wound up going to work for Reagan. I got out of the Marines about 12:15 on the 18th of February, 1972. I had planned to visit Sacramento to talk to some people about becoming involved in a political campaign during 1972, rather than just going back to Monsanto or getting involved with some other company. In 1966 when I graduated from college, I spent a summer as field man for Bob Finch who was running for lieutenant governor then. And so I thought it would be an interesting assignment. And it would give me a way to think about what I might want to do as a longer-range occupation.

I had in mind that I wanted to get into politics from the time I was very small. I felt I wanted to run for office.

II JOINING THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION

Shearer: What started you off on politics?

Magyar: I don't know. I'm an Aquarius, so I want to improve mankind. I guess that's the way I figured I would do it. I'd always had that as an objective. When I'd been in school I had been student body president and I had been involved with Finch. I had always had this interest. So that also attracted me to the idea of campaign work for a while.

I went to Sacramento toward the end of February, I guess, or right at the beginning of March, and I went by to see some people in legislative caucuses. I went to see Ed Reinecke, who was a friend of my parents. He had gone out of town on a special election and was not expected back. So I went by the governor's office to say hello to Mike Deaver whom I had met in 1964 when my father ran for the senate seat here in 1964. Mike had been working as a field man for the state central committee. Off and on over the years he had run into my parents at Republican party gatherings and he would say, "Well, what's Roger doing?" And so we sort of maintained a loose contact. I knew that he was on Reagan's staff. Of course, you know the position that he occupied.

The receptionist buzzed him and told him who was there. He came out into the inner room and he says, "What the hell are you doing here?" I said, "Well, I just got out of the Marines and I was in town to see some people about campaign work and thought I would come by to say hello." He said, "Do you have a job?" I said, "No, I'm just thinking about what I might be doing." He said, "Would you be interested in considering something on Reagan's staff." I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, look, I'm tied up now. Why don't you come back in about an hour and a half and we'll talk?"

I went back and talked to him for about forty minutes. Then he said, "Let's go next door." Ed Meese was there. He said, "I want you to talk to this fellow." They had just had someone leave the staff, a guy named Bruce Nestande. I don't know if you know him.

Shearer: I don't know him.

Magyar: Bruce had gone to work for the Committee to Re-elect the President and then subsequently went to Orange County and was elected state assemblyman. He now is a county supervisor in Orange County. But he had held this position on the staff as assistant for local government, and had been in charge of the correspondence section which is an administrative function. We had about eighteen or twenty people in correspondence. Somebody had to oversee it. Then there were odd jobs that would come up periodically. The position also maintained liaison with the Office of Economic Opportunity. At the time [Robert B.] Hawkins was the head of state OEO. So about the first or second week in March, I wound up going to work in Sacramento for Reagan.

Shearer: This was 1972.

Magyar: Seventy-two, yes. It was just serendipity; it was nothing that I had expected or anticipated. You just never know.

Shearer: How did you know Bob Finch?

Magyar: Finch is a graduate of Occidental College. What happened is that when I was a senior I was interested in considering law school or business school. I was very keen on politics. I had spent a lot of time with the head of the alumni office because as student body president I had gone out to alumni gatherings. (We had a new college president that year and so I had a lot of involvement with the alumni relations.) The alumni director said, "How would you like to talk to Bob Finch? He's somebody that's followed a career path you might be interested in." I said, "Sure."

So Finch came over to the campus and apparently there was someone else there who wanted to talk to him about working for him in his campaign. We sat down and discussed politics and law and how you can become involved and move up the ladder in the chosen profession. When we finished, he said, "Well, look, if you think you want to spend the summer as a field man, I'd be happy to take you on" So I called my parents and said, "Geez, I've been offered a job." I covered a territory from San Luis Obispo to Oregon, along the coast--fifteen counties.

Shearer: What did your duties consist of?

Magyar: I would go into the counties. We wanted to have a county chairman in each county. And we wanted to develop an organization. There were three field men who covered the state for him. I was one of the three. So I had a chance to cut my teeth on some political organization. Of course it never goes as well or the way you intend it to. But that was all right. I spent the summer after my senior year in college doing that. It was just again by accident. I wanted to talk to him about law and politics and he offered me the job.

Magyar: In August I was detached from Reagan's staff to go and manage a campaign for a candidate named Warren Boggess, who's in your area, so to speak. He lives over in Danville now. In fact, I bragged to people that I helped to give Dan Boatwright his start in politics because I managed his opponent's campaign.

Warren Boggess was a county supervisor at the time in Contra Costa County and was pretty well known because he had an airplane business there at the airport in Concord. He used to do the traffic watch for one of the radio stations. So he had a name that was well known. He ran for the state assembly and Boatwright won the election. But I was involved with that from the end of August through November '72 and then went back and became more involved with some of the legislative activity.

Shearer: You said "detached from the governor's staff." Who detached you? Did you ask to leave to do this?

Magyar: They said, "We would like you to go down there and manage this guy's campaign." And I said, "That's fine." But they didn't want me on state payroll when they were doing that. So I was on the payroll, I think, of Cal Plan, or one of the statewide political organizations, which I must say, to the extent I saw it, they were fairly scrupulous about. They did not try to do too many things--using the mailing equipment or anything else--on state time because they were very conscious of some reporter finding out about it and raising hell. They were pretty careful about trying to separate politics from government. You can't do that perfectly, of course.

Shearer: I want to come back to this particular issue when we talk about Mike Deaver's role in the tax limitation initiative because apparently a big chunk of the money that was spent went for staff salaries and there was controversy about whether they should have been on leave or something. I would like you to comment on that when we get into that later.

So now going to the chronology of your service in the Reagan administration, you were with Mike Deaver from March '72 pretty much until July '73?

Magyar: I guess so. You mean after July I went with Donald Livingston? I guess that's right. I don't remember exactly.

Shearer: May '74, is what I have.

Magyar: No, it was sooner than that. When I first went to work there, I was really more under Mike's supervision. Later I was under Don's supervision. That would have been some time in 1973, I think.

Shearer: That Governor's Task Force on Local Government Reorganization started its work in March of '73. And if you were working with him-- There was really considerable overlap in the efforts of the two task forces.

Magyar: It was March of '73.

Shearer: That late? The idea surfaced in September of '72 when the governor described in an aside to a speech he was giving, how it would be if effort were directed to reorganizing local government jurisdictions and so forth. But then the committee wasn't named until November, and they didn't start work until March.

Magyar: Well, you've got the dates. I would have thought we had started even later than that. But that must be right.

Shearer: That may have been the first meeting.

Magyar: Yes.

Shearer: Which means that your efforts probably started somewhat after that.

Magyar: That's probably right. When did it finish, do you know?

Shearer: There was supposed to have been a report in November, but before the preliminary report was issued there was a retreat.

Magyar: Cameron Park Country Club.

III PROPOSITION 1: THE TAX LIMITATION INITIATIVE

Shearer: Then there was the tax limitation initiative in the November election.

Magyar: That was in November of '73.

Shearer: Yes, almost at the same time. That's one of the issues. Why was this a special election? The opponents wanted to have it melded in with the June primaries rather than having this special election. We could start with the tax limitation initiative and your work with Mike Deaver. That is what happened first, I guess.

Magyar: We don't need to spend too long on that because I was not too intimately involved with that. My involvement with that really, other than a little bit of campaigning when we were gathering signatures, was very minimal. I went by, in fact this was the first time I ever met Chuck [Charles] Hobbs, I went by one of the office buildings, maybe Office Building One. I was stopping in there for some reason. I don't know if I was leaving something there for Lew [Lewis K.] Uhler or what. This guy Chuck Hobbs was there, whom I had never met before, and so I introduced myself. We began talking and I said, "Well, what exactly is it you're doing here?"

I was vaguely aware that there was something going on with respect to taxation and they were looking at the issue of taxation. So he gave me a fairly detailed explanation, which I thought was interesting but I didn't attach much importance to it other than the fact that there was this study going on. A few weeks or a month or six weeks later, it surfaced that we were going to have this initiative, that there was going to be a tax proposal. And I thought, "Oh, well that's interesting. That's what these guys had been working on." I knew that Lew Uhler had been heading that up. He was sort of in charge of it. Chuck was there. There was a secretary.

Shearer: Was that Sharon Young?

Magyar: I don't think so. Linda Miller.

Shearer: Well, I have a list here of the tax reduction task force members. And the chairman is listed as Uhler, and assisting him was Charles Hobbs, special assistant to the governor and former director of the Department of Social Welfare. Then a man named Richard Kazan, chief of research and assistant for the Department of Housing and Community Development. Sharon Young, formerly on the staff of Assembly Caucus Chairman John Stull. Does that ring a bell?

Magyar: My recollections are very fuzzy, but there may have been a female that was in there somewhere other than the secretary that they had.

Role of Michael Deaver

Shearer: Now, Deaver is not mentioned at all as being a member and yet apparently he was really in charge of the tax initiative effort. Is that your recollection?

Magyar: Well, today you've got Reagan, and then you have Meese as the number one man and Deaver as the number one-and-a-half man. So anything like that going on politically, Mike would have been aware of, and simply because of his proximity to the president (or the governor at the time) and with the regard that Reagan has for him, he has a hand in any of those details. In fact, the schism, you know, in the White House staff has been with Baker and Deaver on one side and Meese on the other. Meese wanted to be more policy; these guys were more politics. But at that time, I'm sure that Mike was very involved in directing the operations of the campaign.

Shearer: That's how he was described in the Cal Journal, as being essentially in charge of the initiative campaign (although not in charge of the task force) and that he had really directed the public relations, and I gather, the fund raising too. What were his responsibilities as you remember them?

Magyar: I didn't get too involved with that. But he would have had involvement with the kitchen cabinet, with Holmes Tuttle and Justin Dart and the others in contacting them to say, "We need to raise this money." There must have been some political consultant that was brought in on that too. I don't recall offhand who it was.

Shearer: You mean to construct the task force?

Magyar: Well, not the task force, but once they had the product, to say, "All right, here's how we're going to go about selling this." I mean like Spencer-Roberts or somebody like that. But I don't remember.

Shearer: The people on the other side, the professional campaign consultants, were Whitaker and Baxter. I know that there was a technique used, I think for the first time in this campaign, and then I don't believe used again, at least not to the same extent, which was a telephone message. That was a message from the governor, which was recorded and piped into the telephones of all of the Republicans in the state. Then there was a follow-up message in person from somebody, I guess a paid campaign worker. And this was apparently quite expensive. It was one of the most expensive items in the budget. Do you remember anything about this?

Magyar: No, it doesn't ring a bell at all. But that could very well have been.

Decreasing Percentage of an Increasing State Income

Magyar: I'll tell you something about the initiative. When I was looking over this the other night, I remember discussing this at the time. That initiative did two things. One, it put a cap on spending, actually on what the revenues would be for state government.

The other thing it did, is it defined that cap in terms of a percentage of total state income and then required that that percentage decrease over the years until it was 7-1/4 percent or whatever the hell it was. And with this decreasing percentage of an increasing state income, we projected that the total revenues for the state would be able to triple over the next ten years, or eight years, or whatever the period was. One time when the governor had gone down and addressed a group of editors--or at least, I know, the editor and publisher of the Chronicle, I'm sure it was the Chronicle or the Examiner--he explained this, and they kidded him, saying, "If you came in with a proposal out of the blue to triple that state budget in the next eight to ten years, or fifteen years, we would think you were nuts. And yet you're telling us this is reform because it will restrain the growth."

They kind of laughed about it. I remember at the time saying to Mike that we had made a mistake with that percentage and the decreasing percentage. I had said, in fact, "If you went out on the street, the average individual couldn't tell what 15 percent of eighty is. Yet we are doing something that requires them to understand a

Magyar: percentage and how a decreasing percentage of an increasing base will result in a larger amount of money available for state government."

In my opinion, that is one of the principal reasons why that issue was defeated. If all we had done was to say, "We're going to put a cap on the amount by which government can grow," people can understand that. But that didn't happen. And I think in part what occurred is they said, "Well, we want to restrain growth," and then someone says, "Well, let's just go the next step and see if we can't somehow reduce it over what it would have been."

If they had just stopped at the first step, I think we might have had that, which in the history of California politics is significant. If something had been done about taxes, although that didn't address property taxes, we might have been able to head off, or the opponents might have been able to head off Jarvis-Gann in 1978 because the public was much more responsible about addressing the issue of tax reform than the legislature was. In 1969 there was a property tax issue. In '72 there was another, and in '73 there was a tax limitation; and every time, the public was told by the legislature, "No, we'll take care of it." Finally in '78, the public just said, "Piss on you, we've been waiting for almost ten years now." And so the legislature really blew it.

There was kind of a funny incident, when we had that proposal developed, and it was pretty well put to bed in the form it would be presented as an initiative. Of course, this was really under wraps, because the administration didn't want word of this to get out and generate speculation in the press. There was a guy, and I think his name was Maurice Mann, who had come out from Washington to take over the regional office of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, the agency that oversees the savings and loans. And so he was making a courtesy call on the governor. I was taking him in to meet the governor, and they were just going to chew the fat and that was it. He was there as the head of a federal agency.

So we went in, and we sat down and they started talking about the problem of growth of government and all and Reagan said, "Well, we're doing something here in California you might be interested in." And he just outlined the proposal, how we were going about this. This fellow found it somewhat interesting, although I gather he didn't think too much of it, he didn't attach too much importance because Reagan was so casual about discussing it. We left and I showed the guy out.

I went back, and I got Mike, I said, "Hey, Mike, are we making public knowledge of this?"

Magyar: He said, "Hell, no, don't say anything."

I said, "Well, I want to tell you something."

He said, "Oh, no." Immediately he went in and he said, "Governor, we don't want to spill the beans on this yet." The governor was just so casual and offhand about it. "We've got something going on that you might be interested in hearing."

It didn't get into the press until later, but that was--

Shearer: It was essentially his tone of voice that restrained the guy's curiosity.

Magyar: Yes, that's right. If he had said, "Don't tell anyone," that would have been one thing. But he just mentioned that we had done this study and we were going to put together a proposal that would provide for some restraint in the growth of government. And Reagan was very interested in it. As an intellectual exercise it was sort of fascinating to see some of what had come about.

Also they had had Milton Friedman out there at one time. I didn't know Milton at that time, but I had seen him coming out of the governor's office with Lew Uhler. And I thought, "Oh, that's interesting." I guess they may have asked him out to discuss some of the implications of tax policy and what they might do, although I wasn't in on that meeting, so I don't know. But it was about that time. I'm pretty sure they must have been discussing tax policy.

Role of Lewis Uhler

Shearer: I'd read somewhere that Lewis Uhler was the one who actually proposed the idea of the tax initiative in the cabinet and that nobody else thought it was a very good idea except for the governor. And the governor pushed it; he really ran with it. There was some speculation that maybe they would have been able to sell it better had it not been floated sort of over the heads of the other cabinet members. Is that--?

Magyar: I'm not sure about that. However, that's entirely possible because Lew is the sort of guy that if he just gets something in his teeth, he won't let go. He was the one early on who generated the CRLA controversy [California Rural Legal Assistance], and the governor really took some heat over--

Shearer: I have a note on that. Somebody was talking about Uhler's role in the CRLA and said that he had "fired the gun too soon," that essentially if he had waited a couple of years, he could have accomplished what he had tried, but he did so too early. And then he also commented that Uhler was also too soon on Proposition 1, speculating that this is what lost it. I was wondering how Uhler would have "shot the gun" on that one, or would it have been simply that he had the idea and pushed it too soon.

Magyar: I'm not sure that he was premature because in '69 and '72 there had been other issues on the ballot so the public wanted tax reform, although they were most concerned with property taxes. It also could be that maybe some people resented a little the fact that Lew had really seized the initiative, because Lew did not have a prominent official position in the administration at the time.

In fact after the CRLA debacle, he was something of a persona non grata and the administration just said, "Well, what do we do with this guy?" because, as you probably know--that was before I was there--but there were several charges that the governor made as a result of statements Lew made [concerning the conduct of CRLA lawyers]. And then the charges didn't hold up, so Reagan looked like a fool. Then also it really strengthened the hand of CRLA because anything the administration wanted to do later that was based on fact was, nevertheless, immediately suspect because it was coming out of the Reagan administration. People thought the administration was "just out to get these guys."

Lew was something of a maverick. As I'm sure you know, he's the guy that's really been the chairman of the balanced budget issue all these years. He's worked at that for a long time.

Shearer: He was on both these task forces. Were these assignments a way of keeping him busy? They were certainly prominent issues. It wasn't keeping him in the background.

Magyar: He was not on local government.

Shearer: Excuse me, I thought he was. I have him listed as--he's not certainly the chairman--he's on the steering committee, which I took to be the more powerful policy guidance segment.

Magyar: He was not so involved. The steering committee was--Who do you have for steering committee?

Shearer: I have chairman Ed Reinecke, Ed Meese, Don Livingston, Clifford Anderson, James Johnson, and Lewis Uhler.

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Magyar: The steering committee list sounds about right, but the steering committee was not too intimately involved with the task force activities. Let's see, there was Robert Hawkins, Charles Hobbs. There were two other fellows.

Shearer: Earl Strathman, Alameda County administrator.

Magyar: Yes, Earl, who has passed away.

Shearer: John Phillips, city manager of Pasadena.

Magyar: John Phillips, yes.

Shearer: Charles Hobbs was also on the tax reduction task force and Alan Hyman, who was assistant to Hawkins.

Magyar: Al Hyman.

Shearer: And Greg Kroehn. I guess that's all.

Magyar: That's right.

Shearer: The members were the real power people?

Magyar: That's where most of the activity was going on. The steering committee was a group that we could bounce ideas off of. We would get together with Ed Reinecke, who was pretty interested in this, every once in a while, every month. Or maybe we would go in and see him and come back in a week and give him something else. Hawkins and I would usually go over. Or maybe Hawkins would go see him. But the steering committee itself wasn't too much involved. When we did finally toward the end have a couple of meetings where we were putting the report together, there were other people involved-- Frank Walton and I think Jim Stearns. Frank Walton was the secretary of Business and Transportation Agency.

Shearer: And he was on the other task force as well.

Magyar: Well, Walton was a prominent member of the administration. He was a very hardheaded guy. So they would bring him in and say, "Would you sit in on this?" But I'm pretty certain, one meeting I remember we had in the conference room there at the governor's office and Robert DeMonte and I presented some material about the task force. And Walton was there and Stearns was there. And I think Ed Meese was there and somebody else. We were just talking about some of the material that we had put together and what we were thinking of in terms of conclusions and so there wasn't a great deal of structuring going on at the time. It was a little bit more for information. When we had that meeting at Cameron Park--

Shearer: The retreat?

Magyar: Yes, the retreat. Meese was there. I think Walton was there. They brought in William Craig Stubblebine from Claremont College.

Shearer: One of the consultants.

Magyar: Yes, well, he may have submitted some material before, but he hadn't really come up and been involved and Bill Niskanen, who was then at Berkeley, at the Graduate School of Public Policy. He may have had some input on the tax deal too. I'm not sure. But they were both there to comment on some of the issues. There was a guy named Bob Bisch from USC, who is an economist down there and he had provided some input for the local government task force also.

Shearer: The three spokespeople from among the consultants listed on the tax reduction task force are, at least in this article from the Cal Journal, Milton Friedman, William Niskanen, and then William Craig Stubblebine.

Magyar: That sounds right.

Shearer: Stubblebine also commented on the local government issue?

Magyar: Yes, at the end when we had that retreat, Niskanen and Stubblebine were both there and they had some thoughts that they wanted to share.

[Interruption--phone call]

Shearer: Proposition 1 was described at that time as being the most expensive campaign initiative in California history. And apparently about a million and a half dollars were spent by the proponents. You mentioned that the kitchen cabinet might be the source of funds, that Mike Deaver might call on Justin Dart and others. Can you think of anyone in particular or any category of donors who were the backers?

Magyar: No. And you don't have any FPPC [Fair Political Practices Commission] forms because that was '74, I guess, or whenever it was passed. I don't really know because I was not very involved with raising the dough. But I would think that the Chamber of Commerce and the California Manufacturers Association would have been another couple of groups that were probably interested. But that's just based on speculation.

Shearer: Well, of course, the California Taxpayers Association.

Magyar: Yes, but they don't have dough. They might help raise some through their members, but that's not really a money organization. They study the issue, but, that I am aware, they have never been big donors in the campaigns.

Shearer: So fund raising was not one of your responsibilities at all?

Magyar: No.

Shearer: What at that time was Mike Deaver's role in the governor's office? Was he then number "one and a half"?

Magyar: Oh, yes. Ed Meese was the executive assistant, I guess they called him. Mike was the director, I think, of administration. Livingston was in charge of programs and policies. Then there was a director of public affairs, or something like public affairs. That was Jim Jenkins. And he really handled the press and media relations. Livingston had the legislative issues under him, the senate and assembly liaison. Any policy matters that were being developed, such as local government task force, sort of fell under his purview. He was fairly involved with the task force. He maintained closer contact than Mike and even Ed Meese on that.

Shearer: You're speaking now of the--

Magyar: Local government. But Mike's position was--he was called director of administration. So he oversaw the hiring for the staff. And he oversaw Reagan's schedule. He's Reagan's major domo. I mean today, that's the way it is. He's very close to the president. He's a very good piano player, you know.

Shearer: I didn't know that.

Magyar: Mike worked for IBM, I think, for a year or two, when he got out of college. And then he left and travelled around the world. One of the ways he helped to pay for his trip part of the time, as he told the story years ago, was to play the piano here and there. And he would get a meal. So he's got a talent that way. And then he fell into political organizing and got on with the governor.

Shearer: Well, I'm glad you mentioned that.

Problems in Selling Proposition 1 to the Public

Shearer: Earlier you mentioned the confusion on the part of the public with some of the more arcane features of the tax proposition as a reason for its defeat. Can you think of other problems?

Magyar: I wrote a paper that I gave to Mike and Ed too about promoting the issue.

Shearer: Do you still have a copy of that?

Magyar: If I do, it's in Sacramento. I might have that. I can check the next time I'm up there, if you're interested.

Shearer: I would appreciate it, yes.

Magyar: I got a bee in my bonnet one weekend and I sat down and wrote a memo because I felt that I wanted to make some input in how they were going to promote the initiative. This was after the issue was finished and we were trying to decide how it was going to be sold to the public, which I was not involved with in detail. But partly just through proximity, I was talking to the people about what we were going to do.

It seems to me that maybe there was some other issue that the opponents hit on having to do with--I don't know--where the tax benefits were going to go or how can you run state government on less money, and if you can run it on less money, why isn't the governor doing it now, he's got a line-item veto, charges such as that. But the key, of course, with initiatives, is you've got to plant doubt, because most people when in doubt will vote no, which is a rational thing to do. I think especially with that declining percentage of an increasing base, it was easy to ask people, "How can we have more money when the percentage is going down?" And that helped to generate--

Shearer: I think one of the questions was how can you be sure that the base will increase. And I think one of the answers that governor Reagan gave was that, well, he had put a cap on the spiraling welfare costs and made some progress in other areas, so there was going to be more money available. And then of course the rejoinder was, "Well, if you're already launched in that direction, why do you need more restraint?"

Magyar: Yes, I can recall that: How do you know the base will increase? How can you be sure of that? (Although there was pretty good evidence that it had been increasing.) Then what if it doesn't grow as rapidly as you projected? We won't have this money, and where will the money come from? Will it be taken out of education? Or will it be taken out of welfare or other programs?

Shearer: One other thing came up, SB 90*, the second measure with that title. It was a tax rebate. One of the writers said that it removed one of the carrots from the tax reduction initiative because people

*Sponsored by Ralph Dills in 1973.

Shearer: had already gotten the tax rebate; it would not be coming as a result of the initiative. Also because it would reduce the base, it would mean that the formula for spending would be figured on a shrinking base, and you then would have to cut, or the governor would have to cut somehow, \$500 million from the subsequent year's budget. I think William Bagley was quoted as saying, "Even Governor Reagan cannot cut that much out of the budget."

Magyar: Yes, there was a problem as I recall with SB 90 because when it was enacted, in order to allow for changes that had occurred in financing because of SB 90 or because of budgeting practices in the counties, they had to give the counties and cities choices of two years that they would use as their base year, because some wanted to use the earlier year, some wanted to use the second year, depending on what had been happening.

But also SB 90 provided relief where property taxes were concerned. And that was the big bone of contention with people at that time. State taxes were still more invisible. They didn't seem to have the same impact on the pocketbook as property taxes which were more immediate and rising rapidly. That sounds right. Bagley, of course, was the guy who really shepherded SB 90 through. I know he was given the credit in the governor's office. They said he was the one that had followed through.

Shearer: One of the writers said that although Robert Moretti, speaker of the assembly, opposed it vehemently at the beginning, his opposition melted away and he allowed it to be passed because he knew that it would have a detrimental effect on chances for passage of the tax reduction initiative, for the very reason that it would be harder to sell the idea that you would have more money to work with once you had already gotten back that tax rebate.

Magyar: That could be. I don't recall that specifically. But that certainly would fit. I mean speakers of the assembly have been doing that for a long time. What was this thing Willie Brown wanted? He was holding something up last year over the reapportionment issue. He wanted to see how that would be resolved. There was some other point, it seems to me, that Willie was holding out for. So, that's reasonable.

Shearer: But SB 90 wasn't an issue that--

Magyar: That I was aware of.

Shearer: --you would have discussed.

Magyar: Yes. It was not an issue that we could control that well, because of course, the governor was in favor of SB 90. He had been saying we're going to have this property tax relief. And he felt that he

- Magyar: was really under some impetus to provide it because he had gone out and campaigned against these Watson initiatives and so he said, "Look, we've got to deliver on that."
- Shearer: There was a report by Alan Post [legislative analyst] critical of the initiative, which apparently had quite an effect on the possibilities of passage. Do you recall that report?
- Magyar: I don't recall the details. Now that you mention it, yes, I remember Post put something out. And of course, Alan was very well respected. In fact, until Reagan became the governor, he was always referred to as the conservative legislative analyst. Once Reagan was there, they didn't think Post was quite so conservative, I guess. But his criticism made some difference because that was something editorial writers could pick up on. They didn't know what the hell was going on but--
- Shearer: His criticism was based on the fact that there would be less cash from Washington because when a state decreases its income tax collection, the result is to decrease the amount of revenue-sharing funds.
- Magyar: That, in fact, I think is why the counties were concerned about which was the base year, because of revenue sharing. It was started about that time. Yes, that's right. In fact, that's an issue that's being discussed right now with this Ross-Johnson welfare initiative. They're saying if we reduce the amount that's available for welfare, we will lose some federal funds because they are provided on a matching basis. So the benefits may not be what they're touted as being with the current--
- Shearer: Meaning that the state would then have to pick up more?
- Magyar: Yes. And there's something else, and I'm not sure if it was on this or on SB 90. Another criticism was that some costs of government would be shifted from property taxes to fees. Property taxes are deductible for federal income tax purposes whereas fees--water, garbage, sewer fees--are not tax deductible. And so there were people who pointed out that that wasn't so shrewd. After Proposition 13, some people said, "Well, we've reduced property taxes, but to the extent those revenues are recouped through fees, we've actually cost ourselves money," although enough people received great benefits that they didn't mind. This new Jarvis initiative, by the way, won't be the same thing as Prop. 13. Many people received a substantial benefit in Prop. 13, but in the Jarvis, the benefit is much less, and some people will actually sustain an increase in taxes.
- Shearer: Because of the--

Magyar: Well, it depends on whether you purchased your house before or after 1978. People who owned their homes before 1978 were benefited by the court decision that said Jarvis didn't apply until 1978, and therefore received a tax rebate. That money will have to be made up somewhere, and it's going to be made up from a small imposition on people who bought their homes afterwards. So I think that it's not so clear that the new one will pass.

Shearer: It's getting very complicated. The other thing that Alan Post mentioned was that there were some loopholes. The state would have to reimburse for mandates defining new crimes and changes in the definition of a crime.

Magyar: That was in SB 90. It was also in the tax limitation?

Shearer: It was also in the tax limitation.

Magyar: Oh, okay. That was a big issue in SB 90. And then the next year, after they got it in in SB 90, there would be all these SB 90 disclaimers, "The legislature finds this does not mandate costs on local government," which was a bunch of crap. Very often it did. But they just put that declaration in there. In fact, they are still doing it. And as long as that declaration is in there, they figure they can get away with not supplying money to the counties. The counties have sued and have won at the superior court level, I guess. It's being appealed, because they've said state mandates have never been fully funded. But what Post said was true, that was an issue. But it was an issue with SB 90 also. And that was enacted.

Bagley had a bill the following year that was a cleanup measure on SB 90, which he jocularly dubbed "Son of SB 90." And it was supposed to take care of some of these issues, although it did not remove that provision that state mandates had to be funded because--

Shearer: So now the counties are still stuck with workload increases if they have to hire more judges or have to pay them for longer hours and that sort of thing?

Magyar: Yes, if there is a fiscal impact as a result of the state mandate, it's supposed to be funded by the state. If it was a normal workload increase or something, then the state was not held accountable, or if it was a negligible impact. But that was a clause easier to insert in the legislation than it was to implement, at least to the satisfaction of local government.

Shearer: Post also pointed out that what might result would be a revenue shift rather than a revenue limit because local boards other than schools can, under this plan, raise property taxes by four-fifths vote without

Shearer: a vote of the people. And since it would take a two-thirds vote by the legislature to enact any state tax, but only a majority vote of the legislature to let local politicians carry responsibility for the tax increase, logically the legislature would follow that course and just allow more taxes to be raised at the local level. So people would get it in the neck either way.

Magyar: That's right. The issue that your state taxes will go down, but your property taxes will go up, was raised, which I think was a very sensitive issue. People didn't want their property taxes messed with. They were high enough already. That would have been another one of the major flaws you were asking about, the fact that the issue could be raised, that fear could be aroused in the electorate.

Shearer: Of course, the arguments are written clearly and forcefully, but they seem sort of obvious to me, or at least to pose real difficulties in selling the program. What was done by the task force to get around this? It seems these issues could have been raised earlier on and refined out of the process.

Magyar: I don't know. As I said, that deal with the declining percentage was a problem. I taught college when I had been in the service. So I gained some insight into the mathematical understanding of college students--let alone the general public. And I said, "You know, you guys are crazy. You live in a world where everybody is used to these numbers. But just go out in the street, on K Street Mall and ask somebody if they know what 15 percent of eighty is. And if they can tell you, that's fine. But they won't even know what the hell a percentage is." I think that some of it was--and this is my speculation, because I didn't sit through it--that you had some pretty high-powered people who sat around and said what makes sense to us, and there was no allowance made, or sufficient allowance made, for the electorate.

I haven't had my initiative qualify yet. (I have a school voucher initiative, and that's what I'm running on in this legislative race.) A ballot measure has got to be as simple as possible, so that people can grasp the idea because the more complicated it is, the more difficult it is to understand, the less time people will devote to it, and the more likely they are to vote against it.

But I don't know why some of those problems were not foreseen with greater clarity than they were because I think that the time was probably right for a measure of that sort. It's just that that was the wrong one.

Shearer: I've read, and I think you alluded to the fact that the early work for Proposition 1 was done pretty much away from the public eye.

Magyar: Oh, yes.

Shearer: Do you think that had this been open to public scrutiny earlier that some of the defects would have been knocked out of it?

Magyar: Could be. There was also the danger that it would have enabled the opposition to coalesce more quickly and to have built a stronger bulwark (maybe bull is correct) against whatever eventually was presented to the public. I'm sure that's why they didn't want to have that information out.

Also, you asked about this before, I think. There was some controversy over how that work was done and who paid for it. I'd say they were pretty scrupulous about the work we did, at least on the staff. That issue was resolved, I believe, where they said that there was no evidence of wrongdoing. Did they have to repay some of the money?

Shearer: That I don't know. I read that the people who were on the staff then took a leave in order to justify the \$175,000 that their salaries cost and then worked separately so they were not on state payroll.

Magyar: The Democrats in the legislature said, "How do you justify using state money to develop this proposal? This is not something that should have been done on state time."

And it seems to me, the governor said, "Look, this deals with tax policy, and I'm the governor, and it's certainly reasonable to do some research on this issue."

And they said, "Well, this was for political purposes." But it seems to me that after the flack died away, I don't know, there may have been reimbursements for travel or maybe secretarial expenses. I don't think that there was any major damage done with that.

But it was done out of the public eye and it was kept pretty small. There were just a few people involved in it. They didn't bring in Alan Post or the Department of Finance or anyone like that. That could have made some difference. They could have asked people in the California League of Cities, or the County Supervisors Association. I think part of the problem was that you had people that were intensely interested in the project and what they were doing made sense to them, and it did make sense. It's just that some of the practical problems were not foreseen.

Charles Hobbs would have a perspective on that, because he was right in the middle of it. You could say, "How did you guys blunder into this." I think that that percentage was a big blunder. But maybe that's just symptomatic of some other [thing].

Shearer: You don't consider that that was Michael Deaver's blunder? You think he was handed the package and then charged with the mission of selling it to the public?

Magyar: Mike probably would have passed on all of those things. I don't know. To some extent, Mike would have deferred to what the task force came up with. And Uhler and Hobbs--Have you met either one of them?

Shearer: No.

Magyar: Well, they are not shrinking violets. They certainly would have been vigorous in selling their point of view and they would have made a good case for it based on their data. So I'm not sure Mike would have tried to second-guess them on all of those points. He was not that kind of guy. He would have sat there and said, "All right, well, how do we deal with this?" Even if he wasn't quite sure, if they presented a logical rationale, he would say, "Okay, I guess that can be a basis of the campaign." He probably was more in the position of being presented with a final product. Although he would have probably had a hand in stirring the pot a little, as would Ed Meese. I mean nothing like that would have gone without Ed having some say before it became final because Meese--have you talked to many people about Meese?

Shearer: Some. We always ask about Ed Meese, just because he's so pivotal.

Magyar: Yes, he is pivotal. And he has his fingers in everything. That was one of the problems with Ed; he was involved with so many things. But Meese is a very intelligent guy and he is a very decent fellow. No one that I knew in Sacramento who knew Ed--whatever they felt about his positions on an issue--would say anything bad about him. They might disagree with him philosophically. But they all thought he was a decent guy.

Shearer: That's been the case with everyone I've spoken to, Democrats alike.

Magyar: Well, because of the way he was--first of all, he was very protective of the governor. But secondly, he wanted to know what was going on, I think. There's no way something like that could have reached final form without Ed signing off on it, because he wouldn't let that happen. There again you would have another bright guy who would listen to this and he would say, "Yeah, that makes sense," without stopping to think about how would it sell in Van Nuys. So it could just be miscalculation.

Sometimes when you look at great blunders that have occurred in government, for example when Anne Burford was appointed to the Environmental Commission following her departure as head of EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], people say "Why did that happen?

Magyar: What was the underlying reason? What were the machinations, the crafty political maneuvers?" It may not be that at all. It was just a stupid goddamned mistake. And nobody thought of it. But you see enough movies where people play roles where they're very precise and analytical and they have computers, and you assume that there's a higher degree of--

Shearer: That they know what they're doing?

Magyar: Yes. But it's not that at all. Somebody just blew it, and they had a mediocre individual in a position who could influence policy. Although I don't think that the individuals in that task force were mediocre. It's just that they may have assumed away some problems. But since I was not intimately involved, I can't in all fairness say for sure. That's my speculation about what it was.

Shearer: Some people have commented on the exceptional degree of dedication and philosophical unanimity among the governor's close circle. And I'm wondering if that may have reinforced the likelihood that these recommendations would have been carried forward pretty much intact from the consultants who were the--what, almost like the brain trust.

Magyar: On that issue?

Shearer: On that issue. Without reference to the public.

Magyar: Maybe. The philosophical unanimity surrounding conservative principles is what people were referring to. I have never felt that the governor or the president is as capable of executing a 400-pound benchpress as some people think.

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Magyar: Well, I think Reagan is a decent guy. And one of the reasons he is so popular is that people respond to him as a person. And I'll tell you that what you see on that TV is what you get. He is that way as a person. People used to say, "Oh, he was an actor, and so he's good at this." Hah! Reagan kissed the Blarney Stone. If he had been a bus driver he would have been that way. He just has that manner of dealing with people and stories-- In cabinet meetings, they would be sitting there discussing some issue, and Reagan would say, "God, you know this reminds me of a story. Janet Gaynor was on a set and this happened," or something. And he'd pull these out of his record of experience.

IV THE GOVERNOR'S CABINET: PROCESSES AND PROFILES

Magyar: What I was going to say about the cabinet is that I felt, number one, it was probably more moderate in its approach than some people realize. There was maybe more diversity because there were many major issues where there were differences of opinion that were strongly expressed in cabinet. Once the decisions were made, all the cabinet officials would go along with it.

But sometimes they even had trouble with people that were down in the bureaucracy going over to the legislature saying, "Well, we don't like this or that." (Including some people who were the governor's appointees, which I never could understand. I said, "Why don't we just fire these people?") Donald Livingston, for example, was certainly not an ideological conservative. He referred to himself as a pragmatist, which I think was a fair statement. These were individuals who started with a piece of legislation and said, "Well, how can we make it work?" or "How can we shape it?" The governor was very much this way. There were times when pieces of legislation would come down from the legislature that people objected to, and the governor would say, "Look, it passed the assembly by a vote of seventy-six to zero and it came out of the senate thirty-eight to one. What are you going to tell me to use as a basis for vetoing it? It doesn't appear to me that there was much substantial opposition." If it had been a gut-wrenching issue, he would have vetoed it.

One of the things that I objected to, and I still do to some extent, is I felt that the staff was (and I suppose this would have been Mike and Ed maybe more than anyone) very conscious of not having vetoes overridden. They wouldn't have him veto an issue if they thought it was going to be overridden. This has been a problem in Washington. He's gotten a lot of what he wanted in his fiscal program from the Congress. So if he says, "You guys are spendthrifts," they can say, "Mr. President, what are the vetos we've overridden?" Well, you can't see any. It's not as though he said, "I tried to cut spending here, and you went ahead and spent the money by overriding my veto." They could say, "Look, we pretty much gave you what you wanted."

Magyar: And it could be that there was a similarity of mind-set among cabinet members that helped to move some issues along, but the cabinet process that was established in the Reagan administration was a good process. An issue would be raised in one of the departments (you know there were the agencies and departments). It would work its way up to the agency. It would be presented in issue-paper form to the cabinet secretary, who would then distribute it among the other agencies. And then it would be prepared for discussion. It was a very orderly process, as contrasted with what they had in the Jerry Brown administration, which was just chaotic, from what all the people I talked to had to say. I mean, if Brown was interested in something, that's what they focused on. If he wasn't interested in it, then not much was done.

But as far as the governor himself was concerned, I believe that sometimes the superstructure of his rhetoric was not always consistent with the pragmatism of his actions. He talked a more conservative line, sincerely, than he actually followed in terms of the legislation that he would support, or provisions that he would support. You know, he's regarded as a warmonger. I would be a lot more worried about Reagan not fighting a war sometime when it might be a good idea because he would say, "I don't want these guys to get killed." He is not as bad as the press has made him out to be in certain aspects.

Concerning Ike Livermore over in the Resources Agency, the environmentalists, I think, would have to go a long way to find someone who was more environmentally conscious than Ike. There were people far more strident in advocating environmental positions. But Livermore was a birdwatcher and all this other business. Livermore was definitely concerned with preservation of the environment, as were some of the--Now he had some people over there that I think were not so concerned; they were more "Let's cut the trees down and level the mountains." But Ike was pretty genuine in his efforts.

And Earl Brian in the Health and Welfare Agency was a young fellow who had moved along very rapidly and believed very much in grassroots control. The problem was the grassroots he was concerned about existed wherever his feet were planted. And if he was at the state level, then by God, that's where we should control things. And if he were at the federal level, he would have no hesitation about saying, "I'm going to call the shots because I know what's best."

Although I think everyone shared the same love of the rhetoric, and generally saw himself as being philosophically consistent with what the governor said he wanted to do, I am not sure that the administration was as ideologically pure as some people have thought. I mean, Reagan signed into being the Energy Commission we have in the state. That outfit could site power plants, nuclear power plants, around the state. For someone who believes in local control, that's a long way from local control.

V TASK FORCE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION

Shearer: This is a nice way of working into the local government task force. There are plenty of interesting contradictions, philosophically and pragmatically, it seems to me, in there.

Magyar: All right. You know, in fact maybe you have the press release that was used as a speech for introducing this idea of the local government task force. We had all of these agencies of government. At the time there were 420 cities, fifty-eight counties, a thousand school districts, five thousand special districts. All these agencies of government were seen as a terrible hodgepodge. The hope was that somehow the human mind could come in and impose rationality, square all this away, so that we would have no more duplication of administrative overhead. How nice it would be to streamline the procedure.

Shearer: Without adding a layer of extra--

Magyar: Without adding a layer of extra government. First of all, you are absolutely right in saying there is some inconsistency there, because the only way you can streamline all this is by creating larger entities. We have done this with our schools--in spades. Instead of having small school districts where parents have a way of getting their hands on school board members, we've got 10,000, 20,000, 550,000 kids in Los Angeles. And what they didn't devote so much attention to is the fact that government is not just an institution of economic service. It's also a means by which political preferences are expressed. So if you move in the direction of saying this will enable us to capture economies of scale when we get larger, at the same time you are diluting political influence.

That task force was initiated with a clear mandate from the governor to reduce duplication and overlap, to streamline government, which means getting rid of lots of these little agencies. Now the cities and counties--League of Cities and the County Supervisors' Association--were just in hog heaven about this because it meant getting rid of fire districts, getting rid of water districts, and

Magyar: getting rid of parks and recreation districts so that the cities and counties would control this and rationalize services and do a good job for the consumer. All of the special district people were terrified, of course, because they said, "You're going to get rid of us." They had their own little fiefdoms. And the public had their means of political expression through numerous government agencies that they liked.

When we got into examining some of the issues, I should say, not parenthetically but emphatically, that there was never enough time and enough resources devoted to that project to do it properly. We started in March, we finished about six or eight months later. That was even a month or two longer than it was expected we would take. The idea was that we're going to take four months to reform local government in California. Well, for chrissakes, why didn't we do a research project to reorganize the United States at the same time? It would have made as much sense.

Shearer: Extremely inefficient.

Magyar: Yes, it was. And when we got into it, it became apparent early on that it was really a bigger bite than we could chew. And we didn't have the personnel. Most of us had no local government experience. Greg Kroehn and Alan Hyman were too young. One guy had just received his Ph.D., the other one, I think, still had to complete his dissertation in economics. They had some theoretical background that would enable them to look at issues. But they didn't really have any practical knowledge of local government. Earl Strathman, the former Alameda County Administrator, and John Phillips, the former city manager of Pasadena, knew where some of the skeletons were buried. And in part I think they may have seen their role as--do you know, is John still alive?

Shearer: I don't know.

Magyar: Earl is dead. But he would have been a good person to talk to. They were both fine guys. I really liked them. And they would sit there sometimes at our task force meetings, and I could just see them saying to themselves, "Where did these guys get their ideas? They don't know what they're talking about." They wanted to make sure that the counties, for Earl, and the cities, for John, were not done in by these snot-nosed kids that were going to make the world safe for local government.

Task Force's Unwelcome Conclusions

Magyar: It became apparent that we were going to have to take some bite-sized chunks, chew on those, and see what we could come up with. And in the process, the viewpoint in the task force very quickly went from, "How do we get rid of all these little local jurisdictions to make things nice and neat?" to "How are we going to explain to people that the government we have is not operating that badly, and that in fact when you create larger agencies of government, you probably will do more to increase costs than to decrease them?" If you have a city manager of a bigger city, he gets a higher salary than a city manager of a small city, and he gets more assistants and the administrative overhead goes up, and the problems of coordination increase.

The economic analysis, based on the numbers that we had, revealed that there were not likely to be substantial savings from consolidation, which contradicted what everyone expected from the task force. And the sum and substance of it was that when the task force presented its report--do you have a copy somewhere?

Shearer: No, I don't.

Magyar: Well, I may have a copy of the report too. There was a report that was printed and bound and that was it. That was the last you ever heard of it. Because it didn't do what the cities and counties expected to have done, it was pretty well panned.

Shearer: How did you work things out with James Johnson?

Magyar: From the CIR [Council on Intergovernmental Relations]?

Shearer: Yes, the CIR people. At the point that they were in the Council on Intergovernmental Relations they had just developed this idea of the governmental planning area, which was exactly what you decided you didn't want by the end of the task force. How did you deal with their input?

Magyar: First of all, CIR would have been a logical place for this study to have been done. But this task force was created. One of the reasons for this was because it was felt that the CIR viewpoint was not consistent with what the governor wanted to do, and that in fact they were sort of into this examination on a regional basis. And everybody in the administration said, "Well, we don't want regional government. That's one thing we're opposed to." The fear was that CIR was more willing to go with ABAG [Association of Bay Area Governments], AMBAG [Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments], SCAG [Southern California Association of Governments], SRAPC [Sacramento Regional Area Planning Council], all of these alphabet agencies that were involved with planning and which move more in the direction of saying this is where increased political power should be located.

Magyar: The task force was formed as a way of avoiding getting the issue into the hands of nonbelievers. The staff at CIR was not regarded as being exactly the good staunch Republican type, although, as I've told you, I'm not convinced that some of the good staunch Republicans were as staunch as was sometimes thought.

And part of this betrays my view. I just don't think government is good at solving problems, for some very straightforward reasons about the way decisions have to be made. I'm not a libertarian, but I would limit what government does. I think people do a better job of making decisions for themselves. You know this thing with the voucher: I'm in favor of subsidies for schools, but I want parents to make the decisions, because they're going to do a better job than the tenured educators who do not have the same stake in seeing that kids get a decent education. I don't know if you are aware of John Coons and Stephen Sugarman on the UC Berkeley campus. They're at the law school and they're--

Shearer: They are also active on the school voucher issue?

Magyar: Yes, they are. Their approach is a little more at what you would call the left end of the political spectrum because there are some things they want to do to make sure that people make correct decisions that I'm willing to let people handle on their own.

However, I think that the principal reason why the local government study was not done at CIR was to avoid problems that might arise, and so Clifford Anderson [chairman of CIR] was put on the task force, in part, to assuage any hurt feelings; James Johnson [staff director of CIR] also.

Shearer: I understand that part of the money to fund the task force was a grant originally made to CIR, and then shifted to the task force.

Magyar: That is correct. Now, let's see. This is why I asked about Bob DeMonte because he was the director of the Office of Planning and Research [OPR] and CIR was under that. Now DeMonte, the last I heard, lived in Piedmont. He is a CPA, so if you got the CPA society in the Bay Area, they could put you in touch. And OPR said, "There is money that is available from HUD for planning purposes." I even went down to the federal building one day and met with one of the officials in the HUD hierarchy, the regional office. And they were going to be providing some money for CIR, which would be used to fund the task force. I'm not sure--do you know how much it was? Was it \$75,000?

Shearer: Let's see. \$250,000 total. I think it was something like \$64,000, something like that.*

*Task Force Chairman Robert Hawkins stated that the task force "was funded by \$166,000 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, a \$34,000 Intergovernmental Personnel Act grant, and \$50,000 in state money originally appropriated to the Council on Intergovernmental Relations to study local government." California Journal, April 1973, page 131.

Magyar: Sounds right. The governor, when he announced formation of the task force, generated lots of goodwill. He could have obtained more money from the legislature. If he had wanted a million bucks and said, "This is how we're going to set it up," John Knox, who was chairman of Assembly Local Government would have said, "Fine. This is a great idea." They were all interested in getting rid of some of these little government agencies.

Shearer: You mean the special districts.

Magyar: Special districts, yes. You see, special districts especially. The cities and counties said, "We've got to get rid of all these overlapping jurisdictions." You have a fire district that's in the city, and maybe even another city. There's a fire district that overlaps partly, and then you will have a park district that's in part of the fire district. It is quite a confusing jumble. And if you were going to start from scratch, you might not do the system that way. I mean, you wouldn't draw the county lines the way we've drawn them necessarily. But we're not starting from scratch. It's another thing to go in after the fact.

And as the task force evolved, the--in fact, Hobbs had a great line. We were talking one time about the charge of the task force and how we could make government more efficient. And Hobbs sat there and said, "You're nuts. I don't want to make government more efficient. If anything I want to make it more inefficient. The more efficient government becomes, the more likely it is to restrict my freedoms and deny me opportunity to do things. Why would anyone want to make government more efficient?"

It was half tongue-in-cheek, but it was half expressing a genuine sentiment. It was not long into the task force effort that it became clear that the viewpoint of the members was not in favor of consolidation, and that in fact we would be putting together material which would explain why the existing system wasn't as bad as some people thought it was. And since we didn't arrive at the conclusion that many of the proponents had hoped for, the report just disappeared.

Proponents and Opponents

Shearer: Now, who were the proponents besides John Knox?

Magyar: Well, the California League of Cities liked it. The County Supervisors' Association liked it, and major local governments, such as the county of LA, or the city of LA, San Francisco, which of course, is just one jurisdiction (it is a city and county). Who else?

Magyar: Well, the Special District Association was interested, but districts were worried about the task force, because they knew consolidation meant fewer special districts. Who else?

Shearer: Would irrigation districts have been consolidated? They traditionally seem to be quite powerful in the state.

Magyar: Yes, they might have. That was in a rural area; there weren't so many people where you have an irrigation district. That idea I don't think occurred strongly to so many people because ordinarily the farmers are the only ones that are really much affected by an irrigation district, and they run it. The irrigation districts I remember were involved as a special district, but it was more the fire districts and the parks and recreation districts. The fire districts especially. They tried to have a consolidation effort in Sacramento a few years after this task force, and it was voted down. People just said, "No, we don't want to do that."

Shearer: Each little tiny neighborhood wanted its own fire department, fire chief, and fire chief's car.

Magyar: And each fire chief wanted his own department and car. That's a problem when you consolidate.

In the senate, Milton Marks was chairman of Senate Committee on Local Government. He didn't get too involved. I think he was aware of what we were doing, vaguely. Knox was someone who was more a champion of the regional government idea. He was someone who had helped put together ABAG and SCAG. Terrible names; I don't know where they came up with them.

Shearer: Initials, I guess, dictate. But those two are examples of a sort of a review-of-grant-type planning agency more than a real administrative unit. Was that something that you definitely wanted to get rid of?

Magyar: No, the issue was whether those agencies would be given more general government responsibility to help take care of more regional problems, so that they would have the authority they felt they lacked, that in fact they lacked, but that they felt they should have, so that they could bring truth, justice and the American way to the regions over which they had some jurisdiction. That was a problem because there's just a hell of a lot of people who did not want another layer of government, and they did not want to lose a layer of local government if it meant there would be regional government.

And so that was a big fear on the other side; people said, "We do not want regional government." Cities and counties didn't want regional government, they wanted to retain their autonomy. But what they wanted to do was get rid of some of the jurisdictions they felt they should control.

Magyar: The planning agencies, on the other hand, felt they should be given more authority. Now there are some planning agencies such as--there's East Bay MUD (Municipal Utility District). What is the sewer agency up there in the Bay Area? I can't think of the name of it now.

Shearer: East Bay MUD.

Magyar: Yes, but then there's the Regional Water Quality Control Agency. But there was a sewer agency up there, too, that had been created that was in the San Francisco Bay Area. Maybe it's gone now, or it's less active.

Shearer: All I can think of is the Marin Municipal Water District. But that's probably not--

Magyar: These special purpose regional districts, for example, transportation districts, were saying, "We can make a decision that affects the ability of the region to function in a particular way." This water agency has impact, or this sewer agency has impact. And they all affect growth or the ability of people to live their quality of life. Someone said it doesn't make sense to have these small, or in some cases large, single-purpose agencies. Wouldn't it be better if they were amalgamated into a more general-purpose agency that could deal with regional problems? And there is some logic behind what they're saying. Down in southern California, smog generated in LA moves to Riverside. That's a regional problem, and you can't expect it to stop at county boundaries. But it would be a big step to create a southern California regional government. That was an issue that concerned many people beyond consolidation of local governments. If it meant that the result would be a regional government, they said, "We don't like that."

And we didn't recommend it, of course. The task force presented some justification for the status quo.

Shearer: Were there any changes that you recommended? Any smaller districts that you wanted eliminated? Any consolidation, or simply cooperation that you recommended among or between districts, or jurisdictions?

Magyar: I'm not sure if we recommended--we may have thrown some phrase in there to indicate that in some areas it may be appropriate to have consolidation of some districts, but in the main we should realize that costs are not likely to decrease. In fact they are likely to increase with consolidation. To tell you the truth, I can't remember too many specific recommendations because the report died a quick death. I remember briefing the governor on this, and he just sat there. Then he said, "How much did we spend on this?"

Magyar: I said, "Well, it's about a quarter of a million dollars."

He said, "A quarter of a million dollars?"

I said, "Governor, look, we spill more than that every day in Health and Welfare." (I was kidding with him.)

And he said, "Well, I guess we spilled it on this one," because then he had to go before a press conference and say, "This is the report."

What Ed and Mike did, it seems to me, was to say we were presenting this for distribution and comment, partly with the thought that it would just go out there and poof--disappear. And that's what happened.

Shearer: So, Governor Reagan didn't really have a great deal of explaining to do?

Magyar: No. He didn't want to do a lot of explaining because by the time the report reached him, number one, nobody was feeling as though we had done what he had suggested we should do--consolidate local government--and, secondly, there was not a lot of feeling that what we had was going to set the world on fire. We decided people know we've been working on it and that we should reveal it and get on with something else.

Shearer: How was the matter broached to the governor--that you had decided it wasn't such a good idea to tinker around with all these overlapping jurisdictions? That must have been broached to him much sooner than the actual printed report.

Magyar: Well, yes, sooner? I don't know how much sooner. I think the progress reports that he received mostly were that the outfit was working and was gathering data and doing some research and meeting with people. We did meet with quite a few people. But as I said, the task was impossible in the time frame allotted. It sort of came down to him that the report was put together after this Cameron Park meeting.

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The Retreat at Cameron Park

Shearer: Could you give me a little background on the Cameron Park meeting? What happened? Who was there? What was the charge? Did you know going in that it was going to be a post mortem?

- Magyar: It was before we put the final report out, wasn't it? Yes. Well, it was the task force members, Stubblebine, Niskanen, Bob Bisch, Ed Meese, Don Livingston. Was Jim Stearns there? I think he was. Frank Walton was probably there part of the time. Bob DeMonte must have been there. Who else?
- Shearer: The original people must have been there. Strathman, Phillips, Hobbs.
- Magyar: All the task force members, yes.
- Shearer: And Clifford Anderson, and James Johnson, and Uhler.
- Magyar: Lew? Yes. He must have been there.
- Shearer: What about Ed Meese and Mike Deaver?
- Magyar: I think Ed was there. If Mike came out, it was only part time.
- Shearer: Going into the Cameron Park retreat, was there a unanimity as to the conclusions or projected conclusions for the report? Were there any holdouts—people who felt there was still something more?
- Magyar: I don't recall that. I'm pretty sure there was some disappointment that they weren't getting an earthshaking set of conclusions. And there was a desire that Ed Meese and Don Livingston had, because Don was really more involved than Mike Deaver in that one, to have a significant impact on the structure of local government.
- Shearer: He was the governor's liaison to the task force. I thought that was interesting because Ed Meese was also on the steering committee, and yet Donald Livingston was designated as governor's liaison.
- Magyar: I guess that's right. I was, I think, called the administrative officer, or something like that. And I devoted most of my time to the task force. But I had been working under Don for a period of time. So when I was over at the local government project, I was still more or less on the governor's staff, although I didn't keep my office. I did at first. Then somebody else came on to the governor's staff and took my office and I got an office around another place in the suite. But I would keep Don posted on what was happening over there. So he maintained pretty close contact, as did Bob DeMonte. DeMonte was under Livingston also. He was head of the Office of Planning and Research, which is really part of the governor's office. In some ways, DeMonte was more the liaison than Livingston. But for the people who were in the actual inner sanctum, Don was the one that I think was most closely involved.

Magyar: That Cameron Park Meeting, as I recollect, was to sit down and talk about what the task force had come up with and how it was going to present it, what material we would have. That's what happened. The task force presented some of the findings, information, conclusions. And then Stubblebine went off on a tangent about some economic aspect, and Niskanen got up to throw his two cents worth in.

I remember especially sitting there after Niskanen had finished one of his little analyses and thinking to myself that some of the guys that were in cabinet positions could have just given a damn about it, because he was putting graphs on the board and discussing marginal propensities or whatever, and these cabinet chiefs weren't economists and weren't used to studying that sort of thing. It was an interlude in the day that they, I think, tuned out, although what he and Stubblebine had to say was interesting.

But after that oral report, the task force was expected--after the retreat--to produce a written report. That's what we did.

Shearer: Did you write the report?

Magyar: If I looked at it I would remember if I wrote any sections. I was involved when we were going through the conclusions, trying to decide how we would present some information because I had some definite ideas about what I thought we should include in there and what we shouldn't include. We had this wonderful woman who was really a crackerjack secretary, but she would periodically leave the outer office because of the screaming and profanity that was going on as we would discuss these issues.

Shearer: Real unanimity, you say?

Magyar: Oh, yes. Well, this was just among the task force members. But eventually we got the thing put together. It was presented by the governor. When he presented it though, I remember, it was not so much with an endorsement as with a statement, "Here is a report which we are distributing; we are seeking comment. We are eager to know what you think, and see how we can develop a program of action." I think it was pretty obvious to everyone that he was trying to put space between himself and the report because he didn't think it was going to set the world on fire.

Shearer: Were tempers really heated in the writing of this report?

Magyar: There were a few times. There was not real rancor. In some cases, it was more over phrasing, not necessarily over conclusions. Chuck wanted to have something in there about how government spending was creating inflation, or increased government spending was depressing the economy, or something. It was a point where I insisted that it

Magyar: was a conclusion not warranted by the evidence we had to present. If we'd had the evidence, that would be all right. But, you know, it was really just some rhetoric that we were throwing in there. And so we went around and around on that one time.

And then there were other points which, in the grand scheme of things, were probably fairly minor. But it was more a matter of phrasing and emphasis than necessarily lack of agreement on the conclusions, although Phillips and Strathman sort of abstracted themselves more and more from the situation because they could see that the report just was not going to be an especially useful document to local governments. So as things wound down in the report they wound down pretty quickly, and it just disappeared.

Shearer: Where did the report actually end up? Just a few bound copies for the governor and then what?

Magyar: I don't know how many. There were probably two or three hundred copies printed, maybe even a few more than that, because they would have gone to the League of Cities, and the County Supervisors' Association. And we would have sent them out to lots of people who had participated. We had had hearings around the state, where people would come and give testimony, and different groups.

We had a meeting one time in Sacramento with fire district people. I remember getting a call on--we were going to start this on Thursday, and the call was either Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday afternoon from the Los Angeles County Fire District. The chief was really concerned. He wanted to have someone there, and they hadn't been invited. We invited people from some large districts. But he was concerned, so I said, "Yes, all right. Send someone up." We made an effort to gather information from a fairly broad spectrum of people. But it still fell pretty flat because there were no earth-shaking conclusions.

Aside on Ed Reinecke

Shearer: Oh, one thing I forgot to ask you. Ed Reinecke had a position on the tax initiative. He was against it. I read that he--

Magyar: Against Proposition 1? I don't think he was against it publicly. He may have started out with some misgivings. But I'm sure that he--

Shearer: As far as you know, he didn't speak out on it?

Magyar: No, no. He would not have done that because as lieutenant governor, he just--

Shearer: I could hardly imagine it.

Magyar: But also philosophically, Ed would have been in favor of that. Have you talked to Reinecke about any of this? Are you going to go see him?

Shearer: No, I have not yet. I had another question, too. He announced at the beginning of the local government task force that he would be appointed. The governor announced his appointment about six weeks later. Then the task force started in March. Was there anything significant about that? Was he more eager for the job than the governor was eager to have him do it?

Magyar: No, I don't think so. I don't think that was a problem. I don't remember exactly how Reinecke was brought in. But I'm sure early on they said, "Do you want to do this?" and he said, "Oh, yes, I'm interested." He was interested in this because when Hawkins or I would call him, he would always say, "Yes, let's talk about it," if he had the time, if he was going to be in town.

The reason for the delay, I think, was just sort of miscalculation on our part. We thought we were going to have everything fall into place. Then we started checking around and trying to figure out what our funding source was, as opposed to people saying, "Oh, I know money will be available," we were asking, "Okay, what money do we have?" because there was no appropriation specifically from the legislature.

Shearer: Well, that would make sense if your sources turned out to be HUD, the Intergovernmental Personnel Act, and CIR.

Magyar: Oh, yes, that's right. Poggenburg, sure right. That must be in the article. I'm sorry I didn't read it. But as I say, I got it on Friday, and I was campaigning at the county fair--Mike Poggenburg was the head of the Intergovernmental Personnel Act funds.

##

Funding Sources for the Task Force

Magyar: There was a state operation of some sort that was set up pursuant to the federal Intergovernmental Personnel Act. There was money to administer, and Mike was the guy in charge of administering it. In the Office of Planning and Research, organizationally, he was, I guess

Magyar: you could say, about at the same level as Johnson. DeMonte was on top, and then there was Johnson as a lieutenant and Poggenburg as a lieutenant. But CIR was much larger than what Mike had. But he did have some money, so he gave us a grant. Maybe that was for about forty thousand. And we probably got sixty thousand from CIR. So that's a hundred thousand.

Shearer: I guess you could have gotten a big chunk from HUD.

Magyar: Well, that would have come through CIR. I don't know that there was a separate HUD grant.

Shearer: All I have is my notes. But I have them listed separately.

Magyar: CIR, HUD, and IPA? Oh. Well, then that could be. Maybe I'm not recalling it correctly, because the state funding involved was in-kind. The governor said, "Okay, we're going to put this guy up, and we'll pay his salary." (So that represents state input.) "We're going to provide the building and some other support, in-kind support." And that was to match, to provide the required match for the federal money that was coming in. So there was no state appropriation that we ever received. They didn't go to the legislature and say, "Will you give us a million bucks?"

Shearer: Although you feel the legislature would have given you an appropriation?

Magyar: Yes, I think so.

Shearer: Why didn't the governor go for it?

Magyar: Well, one, the administration wanted to do it sooner rather than later. Secondly, it could have been from a sense of parsimony. Or it could have been that they didn't want the legislature involved with it because it would have taken some time for the issue to wind its way through the legislature and the administration might have been afraid of delays that could put the issue over and have the next governor deal with the issue.

Also we felt that--well, I'm sure in the case of Ed, and I know Livingston felt this way, that it wasn't going to be that big a deal. Livingston expressed this a couple of times to Meese: "Well, you know, Ed, I think that just based on what we know about local government, if we sat down and brainstormed for a couple of afternoons, we could come up with some good ideas." They didn't see the magnitude of the task involved in trying to put together a plan that you could justify and support.

Magyar: The sources of funds were available from HUD, CIR, and IPA, so the administration said, "This should be enough money, based on the scope of the examination we plan to make." So that's how it was done. But to really do the job, it would have taken two or three years.

Shearer: I'm just looking at the first item on the list of topics that were to be considered, which was whether we should redraw the county boundaries. That alone seems an incredibly complex task.

Magyar: Sure. You could have spent all of the money just on that. That's why early on in trying to lay out a program of research, it became apparent to Hawkins--and he and I spent a lot of time talking about it--that there was no way that could be done. We didn't have the horses to do it. So it was a process of starting with this mandate from the governor, and then saying, "Well, now, what will we look at?" and having looked at that, presenting a report which was intended to address this mandate. But we just couldn't do it all in the time available with the people that were there. It just was not possible.

Shearer: But with the benefit of hindsight now, do you feel that had you had more resources, people and money, your conclusions would have been substantially different?

Magyar: No, I don't think the conclusions would have been different. There may have been more agreeable data developed to justify some of the conclusions. There may have been more information presented to argue against regional government, something of that sort. But no different conclusions--not out of that task force, anyway.

If everyone in the governor's office had had the mind-set that Chuck Hobbs had (which was a mind-set I liked), then you could say this ideological purity existed, because Hobbs is somebody who is not especially enthusiastic about government trying to solve people's problems. It isn't that he would consign the people to oblivion. He says that government isn't going to solve the problem. And of course he worked in welfare and saw some of the--

VI COMMENTS ON WELFARE; EXCESS PAPER AND UNDERPAYMENTS

Magyar: Incidentally, on that welfare thing, you know, one of the things that the Reagan administration did was to impose a twenty-one page welfare form. Has anyone brought this up?

Shearer: No.

Magyar: Somewhere along the line in, I don't know, '72 or '73, someone said, what we need to do is gather more information if we're going to make intelligent decisions on who's eligible for welfare. So they came up with this form that was twenty-one or twenty-six pages and it was--

Shearer: That would limit eligibility!

Magyar: There were lawsuits. They were asking people about their sex lives and all sorts of information that hadn't been collected before. And I remember thinking to myself that if that form had been in use when the Reagan administration had taken office, the first thing they would have said was, "Get rid of this absurd form. Why would anyone demand all this paperwork?" Yet it was coming from the Reagan administration.

One other interesting thing about welfare is--

Shearer: Why did it come, do you think?

Magyar: Well, because they felt that it would help to get a handle on costs, control the program, make it more efficient, make sure that cheaters were not able to obtain state aid.

Shearer: I said sort of facetiously that it would have cut the eligibility because--I didn't finish the sentence--who could bear to sit there and fill out twenty-one pages? But was that a factor?

Magyar: Well, a social worker had to help them. Yes, that's right, as far as making sure that you were not getting people who were not eligible or proper recipients of welfare. It was expected that it would reduce

Magyar: the welfare roles. But the problem is the processing involved in this big form was so burdensome that the bureaucracy said, "We can't do this. If we have to fill out these forms on all of our clients, we're going to spend the rest of our life in paperwork, and we'll never be able to complete it." And so after a period of six months or eight months or whatever, the administration just said, "Well, we're going to change the form and reduce the size."

But the thing that always amused me about it was the fact, I'm sure, that the first thing a new administration would have done if it had come in with the form, it would have said, "Get rid of this thing. What kind of an idiot would have a twenty-one or twenty-plus page form?"

Shearer: Who originated it? Was that Charles Hobbs?

Magyar: I don't think it was Hobbs. Again, I can picture the guy. He was the director of welfare. And then he went back to Washington. It wasn't Svahn. It was the guy that--

Shearer: Robert Carleson?

Magyar: Carleson, yes. It was when Carleson was in charge of welfare. I think he was the one who did it because it appeared when he was in charge of the agency. And they were really tough. They were going to make sure that nobody was receiving aid who shouldn't

Here's another interesting thing about welfare. When he came into office, Reagan had a task force to look at state operations. First of all, they brought in these outside experts. They weren't going to have state bureaucrats help them. By god, they were going to have a fresh look at this. Pretty soon they got into it and discovered they didn't know their rear end from hot rocks. So they had to get some state bureaucrats who knew the system.

And they discovered that there were all of these grants that had been incorrectly computed. And they said, "We're giving all of this money to people who are not entitled to it because of incorrect computation in the grants." What did not receive publicity, because it was not discussed, is that they also discovered there were quite a few people whose grants had been incorrectly computed and they were not receiving as much as they were entitled to. And whether it was a wash, the underpayments would have just offset the overpayments, I don't know.

Shearer: What action was taken to rectify the underpayments?

Magyar: I don't know. But that was another result of the welfare reform task force that originally reported to the governor; they found some people were not getting their share, others were receiving too much.

Magyar: But it was only the first information that was reported; I guess it was thought to be more newsworthy. It confirmed public sentiment that people on welfare were ripping off the taxpayer.

Shearer: Was that decision made on the part of the executive, or was that--

Magyar: To not discuss the underpayments? I don't know because I found out about it some years afterward. That task force was there in '67 or '68, and it did its reporting, and I didn't come on board until '72. But I was talking one time with a guy in the Department of Finance who had been involved with it. And he was retelling some of the problems.

Shearer: Do you remember who that was?

Magyar: His first name was Bob, so that would probably limit it to sixty or a hundred people that were Department of Finance analysts in '73 or '74. He dealt with some local government issues. I don't know. He might still be there.

Shearer: But he was involved with the welfare reform task force?

Magyar: Yes, I think--

Shearer: They would have been doing their work in late 1970 and early 1971.

Magyar: Oh, that's right because that's when they had the welfare reform. But the discoveries I mentioned surfaced before the welfare task force, I think.

Shearer: Ronald Zumbrun?

Magyar: No. This fellow was an analyst in the Department of Finance. He was not the governor's appointee. He was a professional analyst and was a very nice guy. Most of those people have a fairly professional outlook to what they do. They're not quite so ideologically involved, and especially after they've been there a while. One of the things that interests me is that if you go to Sacramento, and you talk to people, especially those who work with the legislature, you will see it almost doesn't make any difference where they start ideologically. Whether left wing or right wing, after they've worked with the legislature for a while, they're all about in the same place. And they're all disgusted with the system and generally disenchanted with many of the people they work with. It's very depressing.

Shearer: And so you're ready to go right back--

Magyar: --into it. Yes, that's right, I know. I'll go out and contribute to the depression. But the people in finance and in the legislative analyst's office, after they've been there a while, tend to be pretty

Magyar: hardheaded about what they do because they see so much pissed away. They're pretty good protectors, in most cases, of the public's money. But this--why can't I think of his name? This fellow, Bob, had been involved, and he told about the fact that they discovered many of the grants had been computed on the low side. But he said that didn't ever receive so much publicity.

Shearer: That's very interesting because I've interviewed Ronald Zumbrun, and I don't think that came up in our discussion. He did talk about some people who were added in, whose grants were increased following the Welfare Reform Act. I don't remember that we discussed any others.

Magyar: Part of that increase resulted because they changed the law and made it possible to pay more money, but what I'm talking about is ones who were just not receiving their fair share under preexisting law. (Gray, I think it was Bob Gray. If that's wrong, try Brown.)

Shearer: Because of erroneous computation?

Magyar: Yes, someone just made a mistake.

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VII REAGAN AS GOVERNOR AND AS PRESIDENT

Recollections of the Governor's Men

Shearer: You told me something about Lewis Uhler's tongue-in-cheek remark that he didn't really want government to become more efficient--

Magyar: Hobbs, Chuck Hobbs said that.

Shearer: Oh, I was thinking it was Uhler.

Magyar: No, Hobbs said that.

Shearer: What was Uhler's view on this?

Magyar: Oh, I'm sure he would have agreed with that. He wasn't present at the time. It was just once when we were sitting around the office discussing how we were going to proceed. Lew was involved in some of the steering committee meetings but I can't recall. There must have been something else that he was involved with or trying to get going, too, because he would come up with some idea like that tax limitation deal, or the tax task force. And he would really go with it. If somebody didn't get hold of him and rein him in, he would just be out there and going. And the first thing you would know, he would have an office, and then he would have a couple of staff people. He would talk to some agency secretary and borrow a person here or there. He was pretty resourceful that way.

Shearer: Who kept an eye on him?

Magyar: I guess he was sort of under Mike Deaver and Ed Meese. Lew is a capable guy. He's an intelligent guy. And he's an engaging individual. It's just that after the CRLA thing, he was regarded as a liability. They would give him special assignments that sort of kept him busy. But the tax limitation task force came up with a significant product in that it resulted in an initiative. Local

Magyar: government--I'm sure he did attend some of those meetings. But I don't remember specifically particular input that he made, as compared to other people. There was nothing noteworthy.

Shearer: But Meese did have input into the task force. How was he in the role as gatekeeper in the cabinet? Did you feel that there was a free flow of ideas or information from the task force to the cabinet, for example, on local government?

Magyar: You mean was Ed there trying to block things?

Shearer: Yes.

Magyar: Oh, no. Where Ed would have maybe been more of a gatekeeper is with the governor, although even there, because of the cabinet--The cabinet would get together and there would be twenty-five or thirty people sitting around sometimes. And if the other cabinet officials had something they wanted to bring up with the governor, they could do it. Now, maybe if there was trouble brewing, Ed would want to be present. If Frank Walton, director of the Business and Transportation Agency, wanted to come over and see the governor about something, and Ed thought there was a problem, which there wasn't, as far as I know, ever with Frank, Ed might say, "Well, I'll sit in on this with you, governor." But mostly the cabinet members could call, and say, "Hey, I want to talk to you about this." Ed did not insulate the governor in the way people picture Haldeman and Ehrlichman doing that with Nixon.

As for the information we were producing, there was no effort on his part, that I can think of, to try to restrict, or limit, or control what we were doing. Probably because he had so many things going on. He would like to know once and a while what we were doing. And he knew that the ultimate gatekeeper is the one who, before anything is out in print, is going to review it. So as long as he felt we were making progress, he was content to leave it at that.

Shearer: Well, that's helpful to know. Livingston formerly was in consumer affairs?

Magyar: Yes.

Shearer: Which was at one time the Bureau of Vocational Standards and then got upgraded. Did his appointment as director of programs and policy represent a considerable elevation in his status? It sounds as though it did.

Magyar: I would say so, yes. I think he was in bedding or mattresses, or some outfit over there. And then he was director of the Office of Consumer Affairs, and then he came over to the governor's office. And that was a plum because anytime you're closer to the throne, that's where the power is.

Shearer: How would you judge his influence? Was he a heavyweight?

Magyar: He was to a degree. His position assured him a fair amount of power. I'll tell you who was a heavyweight--the one who preceded him, George Steffes. Steffes, by the way, is a good guy to talk to. He's up there as a lobbyist now. The people used to say that Steffes and Ed apparently vied for power within the administration, and that George probably chafed a little under the knowledge that Ed was to some extent supplanting him with the governor. But what I had always been told was that the governor was very interested in George's opinions, in cabinet or wherever, that George's view carried considerable weight with the governor.

And so I would say that Don didn't have the same influence that Steffes did, but Don, by virtue of his position, was the one who would bring a lot of the legislative materials to the governor. (There was one guy who handled the assembly and one fellow who handled the senate, and they would, in cabinet, also present to the governor.) Don would summarize positions and he would help to develop the policy. He would also help take positions on issues.

I remember one issue. I was in the office talking with Don one day, when he had a call--I think it was with Ethan Wagner, who was on Bob Moretti's staff at the time, and now is an important lobbyist up there--on a bill that had to do with the Southern California Council of Governments, or maybe it was the air quality board down there. Don told him that the governor would support this legislation.

So the legislation comes through. And three or four months later I was in Don's office, when Don called Wagner right after the governor had vetoed this bill. Don just held the phone away from his ear a little. And you could hear Wagner just screaming, "You son-of-a-bitch, you knew this--." And the fact of the matter is that when Don had told him what the governor's position would be, it was with the clear understanding from the governor that's what it would have been. But by the time the bill came down, for whatever reason or other influences, the governor had just decided he was going to oppose it.

Don normally had a fairly significant hand in looking at issues and helping to shape policy. Meese and Deaver would have been the most important, even on legislative policy. But Don was right in

Magyar: there. To some extent, Jim Jenkins would put in a comment once in a while. Jenkins is back there in Washington now in Meese's shop too. Jenkins was a retired Navy captain.

Shearer: What happened with you after the presentation of the local government report? You had about six months working in the administration after that before you left?

Magyar: Before I left? Yes, that's right. Most of my time, I guess, was involved in looking at specific national or international issues to provide the governor with information, so that when he would go out and give speeches, or appear on "Meet the Press," or wherever, he would be informed, because this was '74. They were touting him as a possible '76 presidential candidate. So I put together a briefing paper on energy and one on national defense. We were working on one that had to do with--I don't know. It must have been domestic policy or something. National defense and energy were the two that I remember working with most closely. There must have been domestic policy because Caspar Weinberger came out for one briefing. He was head of HEW at the time.

Shearer: To give it or to receive it?

Magyar: No, to give it. It was just a luncheon that he had with the governor. He was talking with him about some of the problems that he saw existing with social welfare programs. And David Packard, who was undersecretary of defense, met with him one time and talked about defense issues.

##

Shearer: Why didn't someone catch the contradictions in the local government task force vis-a-vis the tax reduction issue and the administration's move toward decentralization of mental health and local control?

Magyar: Occasionally things slip through that wouldn't have if they had been read; although, in fairness, unless you're familiar in detail with issues sometimes you don't understand the significance of what's in a bill.

I remember when I was just starting and the legislative section routinely sent bills affecting local government to me, since I was the assistant for local government. I would read these things. It would be a three or four-page bill, and I would make some stupid comment about "Oh, sure, this seems all right to me." One in particular seemed to be a very innocuous bill. It had to do with southern California and problems in pricing police services that were purchased by small cities from the LA county sheriff. Jesus Christ! It was one of the most significant local government bills

Magyar: that came through that year because it was the contract cities bill disputing how the county sheriff was charging. And I looked at that without being familiar with the issue and what the problem was that was being addressed there. What the contract cities were trying to do was eliminate some of the charges that the sheriff included, and it was very significant.

So unless you have worked in a field, sometimes looking at the language in a bill doesn't make that much sense to you anyway. But to a great extent, the sort of person who is more activist and who also is more interested in wielding power--if you take that triad of needs--need for affiliation, a need for power, a need for achievement--that person is not likely to be the careful sort who studies every bill and understands all its provisions. The need for power and that activist mentality don't always reflect thoroughness in planning as opposed to reacting.

It was an interesting experience being on the staff.

Shearer: What kind of comments would you make about Robert Hawkins as task force chairman? How did he handle the process?

Magyar: Given the limitations of the task force, and of course any judgment has to be within that context because it was just an impossible job, I think he did a pretty good job. You haven't met Bob?

Shearer: No.

Magyar: Well, Bob is an imposing individual, a dominating figure anyway. So his imprint and direction was clearly placed on whatever happened. The task force wasn't just a bunch of people who went in their different directions. Bob wanted to know what was going on and maintain some control.

Shearer: Did he opt for that task force or was he appointed, suggested by somebody else?

Magyar: I'm pretty certain he didn't come in and ask for it. He had been in the state OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] and this task force came along. Ed called him in and said, "Well, we would like you to be chairman of the task force." It was felt that there was a job that needed to be done, and he was someone who could do it.

I think they were ready to move him out of OEO anyway. Sal España followed him as head of OEO and there had been some-- You see Nixon was trying to "get rid" of OEO at the federal level, which they never really did; it just mutated. And there was something that had come up regarding a grant or use of funds that had created some furor. I can remember Bob meeting with Ed Meese one time. Ed was a little

Magyar: unhappy about the way Bob had handled it, although the task force assignment wasn't a demotion or a firing or anything. They needed somebody that they felt could manage it. They were trying to wind down. Maybe that was it. They were trying to wind down the activities of state OEO and they said, "Well, we don't really need him there anymore. Where could he be?" And so the task force seemed to be a reasonable place.

So it was a combination of circumstances that put him in charge there. Bob is an intelligent guy. He has the Sequoia Institute now in Sacramento. It would be easy to get to see him, I'm sure.

I think that under the circumstances he did a pretty good job. If I had been the one in charge of the task force, if I had had his position, I might have done things differently. But I can't tell you now specifically, because it has been so long, exactly where I would have placed different emphasis. But it wouldn't have made any difference who had been in charge unless it had been Superman because nobody could have done what had been laid out in the mandate.

Proposition 1: Implications for Local Government

Shearer: We didn't talk specifically about the difficulty of implementing the user-fee concept. That was promoted in the tax reduction task force, or was described as being a preferred way to go. I think that concept posed problems in the context of the local government task force in that user fees are not appropriate for police and fire protection and for planning. You just can't support those functions from the fund source.

Magyar: You know the user fee was to approximate more closely a market process where you pay for what you get. But you're right. Some services don't lend themselves to the user fee concept, partly because the people who would use them most couldn't pay for them. Poor people disproportionately are victimized by crime and they are not going to pay.

The idea was that if you use this market mechanism, the local officials would have to be more careful and more efficient because they would have to be justifying how they establish their charges instead of just setting a general tax rate and then saying, "Okay, we'll take some water out of this barrel as we need it, and into it we'll pour all these tax revenues." With user fees, they would be levied as the PUC does with the utilities. If more money were necessary, there would be a much more obvious public focus on the fact that costs were going up. People could say, "Well, why?" As

Magyar: it was before Prop. 13, the officials could say, "We're going to add ten cents to the tax rate," or whatever, and that's what the tax would be because the counties and the cities could set their tax rate each year.

And if the officials said, "We need more money," the general citizen's tax rate went up. But unless you were intimately involved with the budget process, you wouldn't be really sure why the rates increased. Whereas, if you knew your garbage fee went up, or your park and recreation fee changed, you would say, "Well, what the hell is this for?" Fees would enable the citizen to be on top of those different functions. Tax rates are more anonymous because they are not tied directly to provision of a specific service.

I think the tax reduction task force felt that if there was a user fee, there would be more of an incentive for the public to take an interest. But, as I said, there was also a problem because it's not tax deductible, so some people, especially in higher income brackets, didn't like that anyway. They would have been better off paying a higher property tax rate that was deductible than paying a lower user fee that was not.

Shearer: Another philosophical contradiction or apparent contradiction between aims of the two task forces was with Governor Reagan's interest in returning mental health services to local control and retaining local control in the case of school districts and so forth. And that must have been almost immediately apparent to the advocates of the local government report. How would you resolve these contradictions--

Magyar: Oh, the fact that he wanted to return local control and yet at the same time he would be reducing some of the ability to fund with the tax limitations. Of course, Proposition 1 was focussed on state revenues although, I guess, the Short-Doyle funds are 90 percent state for mental health. I don't know how they thought about that or what importance they attached to it. I couldn't really say. The mental health program was controversial anyway. A lot of people thought that they shouldn't have done it.

I remember--I was not present, but somebody was telling me--that he had been in San Francisco discussing with Dianne Feinstein--this was thirteen or fourteen years ago--the mental health program in the state. And she was complaining that these people had been dumped on local jurisdictions. The idea wasn't to dump them, but to move them back into the community where community-based treatment would be more helpful. The person that she was talking to said her husband came up, and she said, "Oh, we're just talking about the mental health program and the move to the communities." I was told that her husband sat down and said, "Gee, you know, that's really a great idea because

Magyar: it's going to get people out of these damn warehouses and give them a chance to get back in the community." And whoever this was said he left as Feinstein and her husband were going at it over that. I don't know if it exactly happened that way.

I know there was a division of viewpoint in the mental health community on whether it was better to have them in the community or-- the problem of course was when they articulated this plan, it was the follow-through in the local communities that was tough. It was all right in concept, but people didn't want nuts running around their neighborhood. And that's the way they perceived it. They said, "I don't want someone next door to me who has a house full of former patients from a mental hospital." And so it didn't work out. But I think the idea probably has something to recommend it, especially when you consider the alternative; remember those state hospitals.

Shearer: Are there any other remarks that you would like to make?

Magyar: I can't think of anything else that--I thought Reinecke was a decent guy. He had a lot of trouble with Watergate. But he was a very down-to-earth sort of fellow. I think Deaver is a capable guy. He is more political. But he is an astute individual. He's someone to be more partisan.

Shearer: More political than Meese, in the sense of partisan?

Magyar: In looking at things in a partisan way--maybe not. They might be about the same. I would say compared to Reinecke, he was probably more political. Not compared to Meese. Maybe compared to Livingston. Yes, probably compared to Livingston too. Of course, that was partly because it was Deaver's job to keep an eye on things of that sort. And it has continued to be that way.

Shearer: Thank you very much.

Concern for Security in Government and in the Governor's Office##

[Interview 2: December 27, 1984]

Shearer: Let's talk about the context for this story, which was the end of your service with the Reagan administration, during which you were cleaning out your office--

Magyar: Oh, for this business of the classified materials. All right. The material had been supplied by David Packard. It had to do with defense matters, which were fairly dull. If you had been diligent, you probably could have found the material in Time Magazine or Foreign Affairs Quarterly.

Magyar: Anyway, the material was classified. I think it had a confidential classification. (You know that materials are classified in ascending order of rank: confidential, secret, top secret, and then there are crypto, and other classifications.) This material had the lowest security classification. But, because I had been a classified materials control officer in the Marine Corps, I said, "We have got to have some security for this." When I wasn't using it, it was kept locked in a credenza that was in my office.

I left the administration at the end of June, in 1974. At the time I left, I cleaned out all my files. I didn't want to take that baloney with me, so I had told my secretary, "This is the material from the Defense Department briefs we have put together. You will have to get this back to the Department of Defense, or whatever needs to be done with it. Here's the key." And I left.

That was the end of it, until about a month and a half or two months after Jerry Brown took office, when I received a phone call from someone down in the governor's office, saying that they had found material in a credenza that they thought I might know something about, and would I come in and take a look at it. Sure enough, when I went in, there was this material, all stamped confidential, sitting in that credenza. They had just gone off and left it. Of course, the people in the Brown administration didn't know what to do with it.

I guess they didn't want to make an issue of it, or it hadn't occurred to anyone to do so, because they really could have if they had gone to the press and said, "Gee, we found classified material." It would have been the sort of thing that would have attracted headlines. Of course, it wouldn't have amounted to much, because the material would in no way have compromised United States security, or aroused anyone's interest as far as that goes.

I always thought that was a funny thing to have happened, because here we had an administration that was very concerned with security, and yet they had gone off and left this material. I don't know if my former secretary mentioned it to anyone, although one of the guys that I had been preparing the briefings papers with knew about it, because I told him I was keeping this material in the credenza.

Shearer: I have two further questions. First, how was the material used? In preparation for a campaign for governor?

Magyar: Yes. There was a campaign aspect to it. More specifically, because he was considered a presidential contender, he was being invited to appear on "Issues and Answers," or "Meet the Press," or he would go

Magyar: off and give a speech in Texas or somewhere. The press might ask him about a current issue that was before the country with respect to defense, or energy, or foreign affairs, or some such thing.

The purpose of these briefing papers was just to make sure that he understood the dimensions of some of the problems, and knew what some of the issues were. To that end, different people were brought in to talk with him. Packard was one, and people from the university community. One time, we had--I guess the fellow was the Canadian consul, who was in San Francisco. He subsequently, I think, became the foreign minister or maybe deputy foreign minister for Canada. He came in and talked about Canada and some problems they were having in their relations with the U.S. This was just to bring the then-governor up to snuff, and make him aware of the issues.

Shearer: Was supplying the materials from the Defense Department a courtesy that would have been extended to other presidential aspirants? Or was this extended to the governor because he was governor? Or because he was a Republican governor?

Magyar: I think it was partly because he was a governor, but more because he was a Republican governor, and David Packard was the undersecretary [for defense]. Although my understanding is that they make sure that all the candidates for president are aware of some information. When you become a bona fide candidate, I think you have access to some briefing material. You could check with the people, say, in the Mondale campaign.

The thing is, it wouldn't be a fair test with the Mondale campaign, because he had been vice-president, so he would have access to people in the bureaucracy anyway. It would be hard to know whether he received information as a result of being a presidential candidate, or as a result of having relationships with people who knew he was running for president and who wanted to make him aware of this.

With Packard, I am sure that anyone who was thinking about capturing the Republican presidential nomination would have had a chance to get on his schedule. In the case of Reagan, I am sure that he was regarded as a likely contender. It was partly Reagan's personal relationship with Packard, and also the need to educate people. There was a courtesy aspect to the interview, and I guess there was a political friendship aspect to it also.

Shearer: So the political friendship aspect would have been reflected in the fact that Packard personally gave him the briefing?

Magyar: Yes. If Jerry Brown had been the governor of California at that time, and he called and said, "Gee, Dave, I would like to have an interview," I don't think that Packard would have been as forthcoming.

He might have said, "Well, there are some people we can have talk to you." But I doubt that he would have done it himself. Also, if the governor of Minnesota had called, it may not have been the same thing. I mean, Packard is a Californian, and so he was out here once in a while. That is also a factor that, I think, contributed to the willingness to exchange information.

Shearer: Several people have commented on the rather noticeable difference in the degree of concern for security and measures taken to protect Governor Reagan's security when he took office, both in terms of physical organization of the office and procedures for public appearances and screening visitors. Could you comment on that?

Magyar: Yes, in the sense that other people would, once in a while, speak nostalgically of how Pat Brown would walk over to Posey's and go in and say hello to people. Sometimes you would see him out walking about. I don't know if Brown went upstairs and chatted with the legislators once in a while. He may have done that.

I came in 1972, so I don't know exactly what went on in setting the office up in 1967, when Reagan took office, but Reagan is a more private person. That would have had something to do with it. He was not a creature of the state legislature, so he did not know everyone in the upstairs portion of the Capitol to go up and slap them on the back and say hello, anyway. Or to go to Posey's or the other watering holes, because he had just never been a denizen of those places in the first place.

There was the fact that he is something of a private person, and there is the fact--and this was certainly the case when I was there, in '72-'74--that when Pat Brown was in office, and when he took office, John Kennedy was alive, George Wallace could play tennis, and Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King were both alive. So, there was that concern with respect to Reagan, because he was a guy who had aroused some strong feelings. In the late sixties, when they had the Free Speech Movement at the University of California at Berkeley, and there was lots of unrest on the campuses, there had been many threats that had been received. I think they just decided that the era had changed, and that it was necessary for them to be more security conscious.

Anytime, if he went out of the governor's office to go across the hall and up about forty feet into the press room, there were two state policemen out up the hall, there would be two that would walk out with him and then there would be a couple behind him. He didn't just step out and say, "Well, I'll pop across the hall for a news

Magyar: conference, and then I'll be back." When he went out, the state police people were with him. I think that they felt that there was a high enough risk, based on the threats received, and the reality of what had happened to some other political figures, that it was considered necessary to do that.

Shearer: Do you think that there was any connection to his experience as an actor? He'd been a public figure for some time.

Magyar: It could be. The fact that he was an actor meant people would want to get to him. Yes, there was that. But also, the fact that as an actor--to the extent that he was a successful actor, a movie-star type--he was somewhat used to being protected. They wouldn't always throw him out in the middle of a crowd somewhere. I don't think he ever had the problem of being a teenage idol like the Beatles, or Frank Sinatra, or someone like that had, but he was coming from an industry where actors and actresses were being catered to. The idea of having someone say, "Look, we have to separate you from the masses," might not have seemed all that uncomfortable to him, because he had to live with that to a degree when he was in Hollywood.

Shearer: Lived with the sense of an actor as a protected person? As a valuable property?

Magyar: Yes. That's right. Because there would always be people who would want to get to you. The thing is, if you sat in the governor's office, there would be people who would come in, many of whom could be described as nuts, in nonclinical terms. This would happen today with Deukmejian, or with Jerry Brown (except that in Brown's case, they may have been on the staff). There are people who will come in, and they want to see the governor, and it just doesn't occur to the individual that you cannot walk in and have an open door policy with the governor. He's got a schedule that he has to keep.

The security measures to lock the doors always made sense to me, but I guess part of it was because by the time I got involved, the Free Speech Movement and some of the other hassles had been around for a while. We had moved to a new era of civil disobedience in the United States. I'm sure that all contributed to it.

White House Staff Departures

Shearer: I read in this morning's paper about several of the White House staff members who had left to accept jobs in private industry. Michael Deaver announced he would associate himself with Burson Marsteller, a public relations firm.

Magyar: He's leaving now?

Shearer: Yes, he's leaving now for a very large salary. The news "hook" of the story was that several of the more prominent members of the administration were leaving and that they had sustained significant financial sacrifice in serving the president and that they were leaving for much, much bigger salaries. I wondered if you had followed Mike Deaver's fortunes after your close association with him in the California administration.

Magyar: No. Well, I saw Mike after the president was elected in 1980, and he said then that he did not want to stay back there for eight years, and he wasn't even sure he wanted to stay for four years. From the time that Reagan left the governor's office until he ran for president, Deaver and Hannaford had their public relations firm. Mike's income had to have been substantially greater than it was when he was on Reagan's staff during his period as governor. And, more than he has been making as an assistant to the president.

Deaver and Hannaford had some difference of opinion as to the way they wanted their firm to develop. Pete wanted to have a large international consulting organization, and Mike was more content to have a few clients that they worked with more intensively.

I'm sure that what must have been on his mind most recently, was that if he was going to make a move of that sort, he needed to do it sooner rather than later, because he still, obviously, had some political capital in the administration. And he was in a position where--I don't know what he will be making, but it has got to be, I think, about a quarter of a million, or a half a million a year.

Shearer: The paper said about \$250,000.

Magyar: Yes. And I wouldn't be surprised but what there might be bonuses on top of that.

Shearer: Probably.

Magyar: But he's got kids that are going to be getting close to college age. A daughter is probably just about ready to go to college. And then he's got some younger ones. You know John Knox, who was an assemblyman left the legislature in part because, he said, "I want to make some money. I've got kids that are going to be in college." The legislature is not a very lucrative line of work.

If someone were so disposed, he might be able to receive no-interest loans that would give him a participation in shopping centers, and things like that, but most of the legislators don't do that. There may be a few who do, but most of them don't. Some of that is discouraged with the reporting requirements, but the other reason is that most of those people are basically pretty honest. I think if you stacked the

Magyar: legislators up against the population at large, you would find that they're at least as honest. (Although that by itself doesn't say much.) But maybe even more honest.

Lyndon Johnson did very well when he was in office. He came in with nothing, and left with TV stations and everything else. But the majority of legislators don't do that. You just don't have the cash flow with--what do they get--\$33,000 a year, plus they have their per diem. It's not such a great deal.

Shearer: Per diem these days, with inflation, I imagine is pretty well used up.

Magyar: Well, they receive \$62, or maybe it will be increased to \$67 or \$70 a day. If you have a place, even if it's a three-bedroom apartment and three legislators share it, they're going to keep it for eight months. They might even keep it all year round. They have that outlay. They have outlays for meals, although if they eat in the right places, someone will pick up the tab.

They have transportation expenses, which they should be able to have paid for out of their campaign funds. But the legislature pays for you to go from your district to the Capitol at the beginning of the session, and then to go home. If they go home every weekend, that's not covered by their regular expenses. They take that out of their campaign funds, or their personal funds.

Shearer: So you'd be penalized for faithfully representing your district?

Magyar: Yes, to some extent, if you were flying back and forth, sure. Every week, if you were in southern California, you would have to spend \$120, or whatever the fare is now. That's expensive, and I know that when these guys get to the point where they're thinking about college expenses, or even just retirement, they say to themselves, "I'm not going to live the style of life to which I want to become accustomed if I remain a legislator."

I am surprised at Deaver's leaving, because there is no one who can replace him. They will put another person in the spot, but there will not be another Mike Deaver. There just can't be, because his relationship with the president is about twenty years old, and he was much more than just an administrative assistant.

Shearer: I'm interested in your comment on his preference for a smaller scale public relations operation with a few clients he could personally develop. It appears that he is going to a very large-scale operation--I assume it's a large one if they're paying him \$250,000 a year.

Magyar: Yes. Except, when I said a small operation, what Mike would have wanted would have been five clients, each of whom would have paid a retainer of \$50,000 a year to the firm. He didn't mean he wanted a

Magyar: few clients and a small salary. He wanted a few lucrative clients. He was content with that. He didn't want to go out and continue to build a larger and larger stable.

He said that Pete was more interested in having a more international--well, certainly national, but international, too, I think, firm. But if he's going with one of the big outfits that are back there, they do, I am certain, have many clients. However, Mike is joining someone, rather than going out and starting his own, which makes more sense. There is a built-in clientele, and he doesn't have to worry about some of the hassles that he would have to have worried about before.

I don't know how the conflict of interest legislation might have impacted on him had he attempted to start his own business, as opposed to going out and working for someone else. That is a problem today, if you go to some people and you say, "We want you to come and work for us." In government, especially at the federal level, where there are these requirements that you can't for a year, or two years after you leave government, be associated with individuals you have been regulating directly.

There are a lot of people who are very prominent, who are thinking this way: "Number one, there is a tremendous sacrifice I make in income to work for the government, while I'm with the government. Then, later, I'm limited in what I can do." There was a problem with people who were civil servants when that was enacted. Some decided to depart before those provisions took effect so that they could take a job that they wouldn't be able to take a few months later.

Shearer: I should think that it would be restrictive for someone whose forte is public relations. There's a short step from public relations to lobbying. If he were close to the president, how would you separate any future professional activity from conflict of interest?

Magyar: Well, he probably will be lobbying. I don't think there are restrictions on lobbying. I don't know for certain, but if you worked for EPA, and you wanted to go out and work for the firm that Mike's working for, and you were going to be lobbying on environmental issues, I think that's all right. But if you worked for the EPA, and you had been regulating Weyerhaeuser, and you wanted to go out and work for Weyerhaeuser, then that would be a problem. I hadn't read that about-- I had not read the paper today, so I wasn't in on any of this.

Shearer: It was a very limited story--mainly names and salary figures. I think that covers all the additional questions I had. Thank you very much.

Magyar: You're welcome.

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RONALD REAGAN GUBERNATORIAL ERA, 1966-1974

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Gabrielle Morris

Graduate of Connecticut College, New London,
in economics; independent study in
journalism and creative writing; additional
study at Trinity College and Stanford University.

Historian, U.S. Air Force, documenting Berlin
Air Lift, other post-World War II issues.
Public relations and advertising for retail
and theater organizations in Connecticut.
Research, writing, policy development on
Bay Area community issues for University of
California, Bay Area Council of Social Planning,
Berkeley Unified School District, and others.

Interviewer-editor, Regional Oral History
Office, The Bancroft Library, 1970- .
Emphasis on local community and social history;
and state government history documentation
focused on selected administrative, legislative,
and political issues in the gubernatorial
administrations of Earl Warren, Goodwin Knight,
Edmund G. Brown, Sr., and Ronald Reagan.

1980- , director, Reagan Gubernatorial
Era Project.

JULIE GORDON SHEARER

B.A., Stanford University, 1962, with major in political science.

Reporter and Feature Editor, Mill Valley Record (Ca.) 1962-1963.

Editor and Feature Writer, University of California, Berkeley, for Agricultural Extension (1963-1966) and Center for Research and Development in Higher Education (1967-1976).

Consultant, University of California School of Criminology, evaluating North Richmond Newspaper Community Action Project, 1965.

Interviewer-Editor for Regional Oral History Office, 1978 to the present, concentrating on California political history.



